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**Pulpits and Politics: Anti-Catholicism in Boston
in the 1880's and 1890's**

By

Lawrence W. Kennedy

Much attention is given to the anti-Catholicism of the Know-Nothing era of the 1850's but little is paid to the equally virulent anti-Catholicism of the 1880's and 1890's when the fear of Catholics and the hostility displayed toward them was much greater than is generally believed. The relationship between Yankees and Irish in Boston in the last couple of decades of the nineteenth-century was marked by religious conflict, which explains much about both the defensive nature of Catholicism in Boston and the offensive nature of Irish-American politics in subsequent years.

Boston Irish Catholic politicians of the early twentieth century easily become caricatures, unless we understand the roots of their hostility towards the Yankee Protestants who had long dominated the "Athens of America." Many are familiar with the aggressive nature, demagoguery and chicanery of James Michael Curley, Boston's infamous and charming rogue mayor, but too much is made of the persona of Curley and not enough is made of the politics that poisoned his formative years in the late nineteenth century.

The period of the 1880's and 1890's was a time of renewed nativism in both Boston and the nation. Vast demographic changes during these years challenged traditional notions of community in Boston and elsewhere. The negative reaction of many Bostonians to the overwhelming population increase and political rise of people of Irish birth and descent provides insights into American anxieties at the end of the nineteenth century. The fears of Boston's "native" population,

threatened by dizzying changes in the city's physical and demographic makeup over the nineteenth century, were manifested in battles over control of the public schools, the extent and wisdom of women's suffrage, the effort to establish prohibition, and in the 1890's, by the appearance of the American Protective Association (A.P.A.). Religious and cultural conflict; reinforced by economic competition among members of the working classes, provided fuel for political fires.

Nativists in late nineteenth-century Boston organized effective opposition to the city's immigrant Catholic population by forming a coalition of evangelical Protestants, women's rights supporters, and respected local politicians. This work focuses on how the first of these groups, evangelical Protestant clergy, strengthened the most notorious nativist movement of the era, the American Protective Association.

The A.P.A., generally considered a Midwestern phenomenon, served as a forceful expression of anxiety and fears over the immigrant population's effect on the society, culture, and politics of this Eastern city. The rise of the local branch of the American Protective Association was reflected in Boston politics where Irish Catholic politicians were subjected to unceasing and well-organized attacks by numerous and highly articulate opponents. Social and political conflict ultimately led to bloodshed on the streets during the Fourth of July parade in 1895.

The Irish had been only marginally involved in local politics until after the Civil War, but from 1865 to the mid 1880's, the immigrant Irish began to organize and exert some influence in city politics. The Irish attempted to cooperate with the Yankee leadership of the Democratic Party during these decades by providing votes in return for a certain amount of patronage and the nomination of several "respectable" Irishmen for political office. The Irish saw some of their own elected to municipal office, culminating in the election of the Irish-born and Roman Catholic, Hugh O'Brien, as mayor in 1884.

O'Brien, who served four terms, worked to secure conservative and economical government in the city. At first he was successful but ethnic and religious cultural conflict drove him from office in the election of 1888. It was clear that the anti-Catholic forces were predominant and it was not until Patrick Collins was elected in 1901 that another representative of what was by now the city's largest ethnic bloc became chief executive of the city.

While certain evangelical Protestant clergy led the anti-Catholic movement in Boston, it is true that some Protestant leaders reacted to the

alien onslaught by seeking to find a new positive role and meaning for their traditional religious work by reaching out to the unchurched and by attempting to transform society. These latter were part of the Social Gospel movement and they traced individual and collective wrongdoing to maladjustments in society, as Arthur Mann's study of Yankee reformers emphasized.¹ While Mann's analysis correctly showed some Boston ministers leading the Social Gospel movement, others who have received little or no attention expressed the darker side of Boston's heritage: anti-Catholicism.

These other, anti-Catholic clergy found thousands of willing supporters in Boston during these years at the end of the twentieth century. The leadership was varied, as were the followers of this movement. What united the disparate elements was their agreement that the remedy to the social problems they perceived was to reduce or eliminate Irish-Catholic power in local politics. It is true that "not all clergymen shared this pietistic, low-Protestant prejudice against the Irish Catholics,"² but it became apparent that Boston had more than its share.

The most influential member of this group was a Baptist minister and former Know-Nothing, the Rev. Justin Dewey Fulton, who came to Boston after decades of preaching elsewhere. Fulton, who led a renewed crusade against Popery, through weekly meetings and public attacks on Catholics, possessed a talent for providing entertaining programs which attracted thousands. Fulton also established a society known as the "Pauline Propaganda", to provide backing and finances for his work.³ Fulton's themes were familiar to anti-Catholic audiences. One persistent theme was a purported papal plot to subvert American democracy and establish Catholic sovereignty. Another favorite theme, the decadence of Catholic clergy, was seen in lurid accounts of immorality resulting from celibacy, the confessional and other Catholic practices.

¹Arthur Mann, *Yankee Reformers in the Urban Age Social Reform in Boston, 1890-1900* (New York, 1954), pp. 74-100.

²Gerald W. McFarland, *Mugwumps, Morals and Politics: 1884-1920* (Amherst, Massachusetts, 1975), p. 28.

³*Boston Herald*, January 20, 1888. Also see Donald Kinzer, *An Episode in Anti-Catholicism: The American Protective Association* (Seattle, 1964), p. 22.

Fulton's first theme was expressed in numerous sermons and in his books. One of his books, *Washington in the Lap of Rome*, was dedicated to "Americans who will aid in throttling Jesuitism," which he defined as despotism and "the greatest and most enormous of abuses."⁴ Fulton claimed no loyal Roman Catholic was qualified to serve as a legislator because "no man who truckles to Romanism is fit to be a representative of a free people." Another book, *Fight with Rome*, was also dedicated to the obvious theme of combating papal influence. This volume claimed that Romanism injured citizenship and especially warned of the Roman control over children.⁵

Dealing with the other major theme, Fulton's *Why Priests Should Wed*, was published in 1888 and given to those who purchased tickets to a pair of lectures given by Fulton at Boston's Mechanics Hall. Some six to seven thousand people paid a dollar a ticket to attend the series.⁶

The Rev. Alonzo A. Miner, former president of Tufts College and at this time minister at Boston's Columbus Avenue Universalist Church, was another representative of anti-Catholic clergy, though the Irish Catholic Boston *Pilot* suggested that "Dr. Miner is not an unprincipled mountebank like Fulton," but a member of "the better class of anti-Catholic bigots."⁷ In an 1887 address to his fellow clergy, Dr. Miner denounced the Catholic Church for being "as sly as the serpent and a great deal more venomous."⁸ He said that there were things going on in Boston that, if known to the public, would horrify it. For instance, he asked, "What is the meaning of cells under our own cathedral here in Boston?" The insinuation was that guns were stored there for an attack on Protestants, a familiar canard of anti-Catholic speakers in the nineteenth century.

⁴Justin Dewey Fulton, *Washington in the Lap of Rome* (Boston, 1888) p. 12 and pp. 78-79.

⁵Justin Dewey Fulton, *Fight With Rome* (New York, 1977), p. 393 and p. 92.

⁶*Boston Globe*, January 23 and 24, 1888.

⁷*Pilot*, June 2, 1888.

⁸*Pilot*, November 12, 1887.

Another familiar point of dispute was education and a leading Boston cleric, the Rev. E.J. Haynes of the Tremont Temple, went directly to the heart of the issue by declaring that, "Rome was out to destroy the public schools."⁹ Other ministers supporting the anti-Catholic movement included Rev. James B. Dunn of the Presbyterian Church on Columbus Avenue and a former Catholic called "Evangelist Leyden".¹⁰ Leyden established himself as the pastor of a small group of "Reformed Catholics" at the Clarendon Street Baptist Church.

It was clear that Protestant-Catholic antagonism was by this time "a major and durable cleavage line of the city's partisan politics."¹¹ Two school controversies in 1888 show the rising level of religious and political conflict and in both, Protestant clergy played a key role. One fight dealt with the proposed state inspection of private schools. The other battle was over the issue of an anti-Catholic text and teaching in the Boston public schools.

The State Board of Education and the governor both began the year 1888 urging the need to regulate private schools.¹² A special joint committee of the legislature reported a controversial bill for the Inspection of Private Schools, placing the private schools under the supervision of the local school committee.¹³ Catholics perceived the bill as a challenge to their right to create and maintain their own schools. Prominent among the supporters of the bill were Protestant clergymen. Rev. Emory J. Haynes, who spoke of the "apprehension and alarm", occasioned by the fact that so many students were presently not under public supervision.¹⁴ Rev. Mr. Leyden of the Clarendon Street Baptist

⁹*Herald*, November 14, 1887.

¹⁰Robert H. Lord, John E. Sexton and Edward T. Harrington, *History of the Archdiocese of Boston* 3 v. (New York, 1944), III, p. 107.

¹¹Paul Kleppner, "From Party to Factions: The Dissolution of Boston's Majority Party, 1876-1908," in *Boston 1700-1980: The Evolution of Urban Politics*, edited by Ronald P. Formisano and Constance K. Burns (Westport, Conn., 1984), p. 111.

¹²*Annual Report of the State Board of Education*, (Boston, 1885-1886), p. 102; *Annual Report of the State Board of Education*, (Boston, 1887-1888), p. 141.

¹³Lord, *History of the Archdiocese*, III, p. 114.

¹⁴*Pilot*, March 31, 1888.

Church also favored the bill. He claimed that Catholic parents were intimidated by the threatened loss of the sacraments if they failed to send their children to Catholic schools and asserted that the Catholic Church wanted to corrupt the citizenry by gaining control of the public school system.¹⁵ The Rev. Cyrus A. Bartol offered dramatic support of the bill.¹⁶ He flourished scapulars and religious medals while denouncing Catholic training, which produced disloyal and “dangerous citizens.” Other supporters of the bill included the Rev. James M. Gray, rector of the Reformed Episcopal Church on Dartmouth Street in Boston and the Rev. M.R. Deming of the Baptist Tabernacle.

Despite their testimony, the Inspection Bill was allowed to die.¹⁷ It was defeated in the Republican-dominated legislature on May 24, 1888, in what the *Pilot* labeled a triumph of “true Americanism”.¹⁸ Although the issue would be revisited the next year, the Catholic community felt that reason had triumphed and their schools were safe from governmental control. At the very time this victory was being celebrated, however, a new campaign began over the issue of purported Catholic control of the public schools. This is the famous Travis case.

In considering the period of the Protestant Reformation, Charles B. Travis, a teacher of Boston English High School, defined an indulgence as “permission to commit sin.”¹⁹ Father Theodore Metcalf, a Catholic priest and pastor of some of Travis’ students protested this slur on

¹⁵*Pilot*, April 7, 1888.

¹⁶Lord, *History of the Archdiocese*, III, p. 116 cites Bartol as an opponent of the bill, but the account of the *Pilot*, April 7, 1888 contradicts this. The confusion may come from the fact that Bartol had been sympathetic to the Catholic position in the 1859 school case of Thomas Wall. Bartol wrote at that time that there were no signs of a plan of Papal encroachment. He warned that Jesuits could be observed for wrongdoing, “But fear them, let us not. Wrong them, let us not.” See Cyrus A. Bartol, *Religion in Our Public Schools*, (Boston, 1859), p. 18.

¹⁷Richard Harmond, “Troubles of Massachusetts Republicans During the 1880s,” *Mid-America* 56 (1974), p. 97.

¹⁸*Pilot*, June 2, 1888.

¹⁹*Pilot*, May 5, 12 and 19, 1888.

Catholic teaching in a letter to the Boston School Committee. Metcalf also objected, on similar grounds, to Travis's use of William Swinton's text *Outline of World History*.

The Boston School Committee, at a meeting where only six Protestant members and all twelve Catholic members were present (out of a total membership of twenty-four), censured Travis, transferred him to teaching English and replaced Swinton's text. Catholics may have felt vindicated but the School Committee decision was met with outrage and defiance by many in the Protestant community. Mass meetings, held to protest the school board's actions, led to the creation of political organizations, which would transform the school board and oust Mayor Hugh O'Brien and the Irish from control of City Hall.

One such group, organized by a group of British-Americans, met at Faneuil Hall and another, convened by local Protestant ministers, met at Tremont Temple.²⁰ These meetings passed resolutions that the school board should restore the use of Swinton's text and that Travis should be reinstated as a teacher of history. Furthermore, no Catholic should be elected to the School Committee, and any School Committee member who voted to drop Swinton's text should be defeated in the fall election. A final point was that no Catholic teachers be employed in the Boston schools.²¹

A "Committee of 100" was largely responsible for the increased voter turnout for the fall election in 1888. The Committee, formed at the meeting at Faneuil Hall on July 11, 1888, was headed by Rev. J.B. Dunn and included prominent businessmen and Protestant preachers such as Fulton and Miner.²² As Boston's local election drew closer, the Committee and others convened a series of mass rallies to show support for the public schools and to rail against the Catholic influence.

The first mass meeting of the municipal campaign was held under the auspices of the Committee of 100 at Tremont Temple on November 15. The leading speakers were the Rev. Dr. Miner, the Rev. Dr. Dunn and Professor Townsend of Boston University. Miner claimed there would be no security in the public schools "if they were in any respect

²⁰*Boston Daily Advertiser*, July 12, 1888.

²¹*Pilot*, July 28, 1888.

²²*Globe*, November 21, 1888.

under the influence of Catholics in the School Board.”²³ Miner stated that he wanted to keep the schools free of Jesuitical influence, because the public schools were the “fountain of our morality and true goodness.” If preserved, the public schools would allow the American people to reach “the acme of their true greatness.”

As the series of meetings continued that November, the Committee of 100 again met at Tremont Temple. Again Rev. J.B. Dunn spoke, stating that the Protestant people of Boston would show no more inclination to compromise on the school issue than had Martin Luther on the issue of indulgences.²⁴ Another clergyman, Rev. John F. Clymer, took the stage to echo this opinion and stated that compromise was impossible because “Rome will never be satisfied with anything short of the destruction of the schools.” He stated what he saw as the central point quite clearly. “Rome knows as we do: Control the schools and you control the country. She knows that if she teaches the children, she can afford to wait awhile to make the laws.”

The following week yet another mass meeting convened in the Tremont Temple. Following the typical pattern of such meetings and evoking the religious nature of the occasion, music was provided and a collection was taken. Rev. Dr. J.M. Gray argued that the Protestants were not making war on the Catholic Church, “but the church has attacked our public schools and we are simply acting on the defensive.”²⁵ Rev. J.W. Hamilton claimed that the school committee had violated state law against the adoption of a text favoring any sect when they substituted a new book for Swinton’s. Rev. Gray noted that some political parties in the city were afraid to put all Protestant names on their ticket but added, “We will have no compromise.” He announced that the Committee of 100 tickets was backed by the Loyal Women of America and the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, which represented some twelve to fifteen thousand voters. Rev. Dunn then rose to add 3,500 to these figures and call for five hundred volunteers to distribute ballots on Election Day.

²³*Globe*, November 16, 1888.

²⁴*Globe*, November 23, 1888.

²⁵*Globe*, November 30, 1888.

Popular as these meetings were, the anti-Catholic forces did not rely on the spoken word alone. Another aspect of the movement was newspaper articles carrying sermons and diatribes against Catholics, as well as the production and distribution of circulars and books stating the case against Catholics. An example of such publicity was a book by the Rev. Daniel Dorchester, titled *Romanism vs. the Public School System*. The volume boasted that it would provide “everything you need to know about the present controversy.”²⁶ In addition, circulars were distributed throughout the city by various groups that opposed Catholics in Boston politics. One circular was headed, “Do you want Americans to rule this country or the Pope of Rome?” while another bore the warning “The Catholics are organizing to capture this country. They have got the army, the judiciary. Look out or we will have no public schools.”²⁷

Broad-based support for an attack on Catholics was also sought by recruiting women voters for the school committee elections. For the anti-Catholic movement, to gain more Protestant women voters was a critical goal. In fact, the greatest strength of the anti-Catholic forces lay in school elections where women were allowed to vote: since Catholic women voted infrequently, the Protestant vote was more influential. By the time of the election, there were 20,570 women voters in Boston out of a total of 25,279 in the state.²⁸

On Election Day, in December of 1888, the Republican ticket swept the local election. The only sitting member of the school committee elected was Caroline E. Hastings, who won a two-year term. (She had voted against removing Swinton’s text.) The Republican ticket included ten Protestants and one “Hebrew”. The Republicans captured the entire School Committee slate and also elected eight aldermen.²⁹

²⁶*Transcript*, November 15, 1888.

²⁷*Globe*, December 9, 1888.

²⁸Lois B. Merk, “Boston’s Historic Public School Crisis,” *New England Quarterly* vol. 31 (1959), p. 181. Also see Edmund B. Thomas, Jr., “School Suffrage and the Campaign for Women’s Suffrage in Massachusetts, 1879-1920,” *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* vol.25 (Winter 1997): pp. 1-17 and Polly Welts Kaufman, *Boston Women and City School Politics, 1872-1905*, (New York: Garland Press, 1994).

²⁹*Globe*, December 12 and 13, 1888.

The *Transcript* was pleased to see the vote as “an overwhelming and memorable rebuke of priestly intermeddling with our schools.”³⁰ The results showed the community’s determination to resist “the least ecclesiastical espionage over our common school system” and predicted that the new school board would “stand like a wall against the enemies of our public schools.”

The mayoral contest was as decisive and as important. Mayor Hugh O’Brien, elected four times, was finally defeated in a third match-up with Thomas N. Hart. (Hart received 32,827 votes to O’Brien’s 31,862 giving the Republican a majority of 1,965.) The issue was not so much O’Brien or Hart as the Irish Catholic influence in local politics. Catholic influence on the school board stirred up political opposition, which swept O’Brien out of City Hall. As an editorial in the *Transcript* observed, the school issue could not be separated from that of city government.³¹ In this election, the Republican Party lined up with Protestant women, British-Americans, and members of Evangelical creeds to oust the Irish Democrats from both the School Committee and from City Hall.³² It is clear that the Republicans were trying to bolster their fortunes by capitalizing on the religious issue statewide, and their dabbling in nativism and anti-Catholicism made “partisan lines more congruent with lines already separating cultural groups.”³³ The Boston experience shows that Protestant preachers played an important role in stirring up nativism.

Over the next decade, nativist Yankee Protestants who continued to focus on school issues, were largely successful in controlling the Boston School Committee. Irish Catholics had to content themselves with playing a secondary political role as part of a Democratic Party coalition, which named successful mayoral candidates in all but one of the years between 1889 and 1899.

³⁰*Transcript*, December 12, 1888.

³¹*Transcript*, December 4, 1888.

³²Harmond, “Troubles of Massachusetts Republicans,” p. 97.

³³Dale Baum, “The Massachusetts Voter: Party Loyalty in the Gilded Age, 1872-1896”, *Massachusetts in the Gilded Age: Selected Essays*, edited by Jack Tager and John Ifkovic (Amherst, Mass., 1985), p. 55.

In the mayoral election of 1889, the Democrats had again nominated an Irish-American candidate and lost, so in December of 1890, they turned to a leading Yankee Democrat, named Nathan Matthews, Jr., who won the mayoralty.³⁴ The Democratic coalition of Yankees and Irish offered a Yankee politician at the head of the electoral ticket who was prepared to accommodate the needs of the Irish community through his administration.

Matthews pledged his mayoral terms to the vigorous pursuit of efficiency and economy and, with Irish support, won re-election in 1891 and 1892. Despite Matthews' 1892 victory, the Irish-dominated *Republic* recorded that "The Bigots Win" on the school committee. All winners were identified as anti-Catholic or tied to the Know-Nothing societies called the "Music Hall fanatics."³⁵

The Irish and Yankee Democratic political coalition was to undergo a great deal of stress over the next few years with economic problems worsening and anti-Catholic feeling rising. The coalition started to unravel over issues raised by the economic depression that came in the wake of the severe financial panic of 1893. The laissez-faire approach of Mayor Matthews and the disdainful attitude of private relief agencies proved totally unacceptable for the workers in Boston, largely Irish. Irish political leaders like Patrick Maguire and John F. Fitzgerald called for more direct and progressive government action to help their hard-pressed constituents.

In 1894, local boss Patrick Maguire chose as the replacement for the discredited and unhappy Matthews, another Protestant Yankee, Francis Peabody (brother of the famous Endicott Peabody, the founder of Groton). Maguire believed that only a Yankee could defeat the Republican nominee. The choice was "ludicrous", and "unbelieving Irish ward bosses sat out the election of 1894, enabling Edwin Curtis, a Republican, to win a year in city hall."³⁶

Curtis was an inactive mayor, whose only accomplishments were to appoint a commission to study the city's finances and to successfully

³⁴*Globe*, December 15, 1890.

³⁵*The Republic*, December 17, 1892.

³⁶Peter K. Eisinger, "Ethnic Political Transition in Boston, 1884-1933: Some Lessons for Contemporary Cities," *Political Science Quarterly*, (1978), p. 225.

support the extension of the mayoral term of office to two years. (He later was Police Commissioner during the Boston Police Strike of 1919.) More significantly, the anti-Catholic movement associated with the American Protective Association (A.P.A.), peaked, and then declined during the course of Curtis' single term in office during 1895. By year's end, the old formula for a Yankee-Irish coalition proved successful once more and the Democrats were again able to take over the mayor's office.

The movement against the Boston Irish grew especially strong in 1893, when the A.P.A. appeared on the scene in Massachusetts, and continued to increase until July 4, 1895, when an A.P.A. parade in East Boston turned into a riot and ended in bloodshed. The peak was reached in the spring of 1895 when a newspaper, *The Boston Daily Standard*, emerged to lead the charge for the American Protective Association. As Geoffrey Blodgett wrote, "lashed by the editorial violence of a local A.P.A. sheet, the *Daily Standard*, Boston anti-Catholicism reached an ugly climax on July 4."³⁷

The *Standard* often stated that it was not an A.P.A. paper, but everyone in Boston knew better. The paper regarded itself as a part of the "patriotic movement." Indeed, Donald Kinzer's study of the A.P.A. points out that given the fact that it was a secret organization, it is better to consider the A.P.A. as a movement rather than to consider it in strictly organizational terms. A review of the *Standard* during this period clearly demonstrates both the accuracy of this insight and the clear connections between the movement and the local evangelical clergy in fomenting opposition to Catholics.

This coalition was apparent right from the beginning when the paper was inaugurated in March of 1895 by a massive celebration at Boston's leading Baptist church, the People's Temple. The celebration was chaired by a local congressman (Leopold Morse) and included the Rev. S.F. Smith, author of the anthem, "America," and Julia Ward Howe, author of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic."³⁸ A crowd of 4,000 men and women applauded the speakers, cheered their words and waved a small American flag, a key symbol of the paper. (Spread across the

³⁷Geoffrey Blodgett, *The Gentle Reformers: Massachusetts in the Cleveland Era*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), p. 151.

³⁸*Boston Daily Standard*, March 28, 1895.

Standard's masthead, the flag was printed in color, a technological marvel of the time.)

Congressman Morse gave the opening address, which called for the divorce of church and state, radical legislation on immigration, no public money for sectarian schools, and the need for suppression of the drink curse. These were all themes that the paper returned to again and again.

The inaugural edition of this paper was dated March 28, 1895, and immediately the *Standard* positioned itself as a defender of the rights of native-born Protestants. The editorial statement of purposes in this first issue stated that the native citizen has rights which should be respected by “naturalized citizens born on the banks of the Shannon, the Tiber or the Rhone” and “the best way to protect American rights “is to restrict the unskilled, criminal and pauper immigration which Europe is pouring into our ports.” Over the past thirty years “we have been cursed by the unarmed invasions of the Kelts, the Goths, the Huns” and others who “come to America, not for love of liberty, but because they could get more money for less work, and more bread for less money than in their own land.”

This same editorial also took up the religious issue. The *Standard*, they claimed, “has as much respect for an honest Catholic as for an honest Unitarian, but it believes there is a certain connection between bigoted faith and crime.” This connection was underlined and clarified as the paper continued, the “majority of the immigrants are Catholic, as are the majority of criminals, but it is not a question of religion.” Beyond the criminality of Catholic immigrants, it was their political power that raised fears. It was “the Kelt who runs a gin mill or two and local politics” who offended and stimulated the nativist movement. “We are thoroughly sick of him. He is a liar, a coward and an ingrate... It is this vulgar beast that has stung the Americans into opposition and forced the organization of that splendid body, the A.P.A.”³⁹ The *Standard* claimed to know some good Catholics who were ashamed of their fellow-worshipers and the paper stood ready to defend freedom of worship but when it came to the typical Irish politician, the *Standard* did “not propose to have him any longer for a political boss, nor to encourage his feeding in such green and gregarious gangs at the municipal crib.”⁴⁰

³⁹*Daily Standard*, March 28, 1895.

⁴⁰*Daily Standard*, March 30, 1895.

Maintaining the fiction of a public distance from the A.P.A., the *Standard* took pains to proclaim, in a later editorial, that the movement and the paper were not organized for aggression but for the defense of American principles. It also issued a warning. "But at the same time, if it becomes necessary to attack there will be no hesitation as to that course. The ammunition is ready and the men and transportation for the contest are at hand...This is plain talk, but the time for kid gloves is past. There is just one teaching of the master, which the *Standard* proposes to violate, and that is about the blow on the right cheek. The party dealing such a blow will need to guard his own left cheek or go down."⁴¹ Protestant clergy were not so likely to repudiate the Christian injunction against violence but certain of them fanned the sparks of hostility into flames of hatred.

The Rev. Justin Fulton, the superstar of anti-Catholicism in Boston, was featured in the *Standard* on a regular basis. He directed his scorn at not just the Irish, but other Catholic groups such as the Italians and especially the French who menaced New England by their invasion from Canada. Fulton's address before a large and enthusiastic crowd at Boston's Music Hall was published in the paper. He warned, as he prepared for a missionary journey to the North, that "New England is to be redeemed or Romanized. The Devil and the wicked are on the side of Rome...It is not emigration from Europe that endangers our liberties but emigration from Quebec of a people without special ability to do anything but raise large families."⁴²

A *Standard* editorial continued along Fulton's line by objecting to "cheap immigrants."⁴³ The *Standard* claimed that immigrants "cheap in character, intelligence and capacity" posed a threat that needed to be resisted. Accordingly, like Dr. Fulton, the *Standard* was not against just the Irish. In fact this same editorial argued that: "The immigration from Ireland has been bad enough in the past, but the tables of recent years reveal a state of affairs well calculated to alarm every friend of liberty and good citizenship." (The tables show the numbers of immigrants from Austria-Hungary, Russian and Poland, and Italy.) "These immigrants are

⁴¹*Daily Standard*, March 30, 1895.

⁴²*Daily Standard*, April 1, 1895.

⁴³*Daily Standard*, June 24, 1895.

a menace because they preserve their foreign speech and customs. No nation divided against itself can stand, and real unity is dependent on a homogeneous life. There must be one common language and customs which are practically uniform throughout the country. Little Italies, Polands, Hungaries and Irelands planted in our cities are so many centres of contamination and disintegration.”

The general attack on immigrants received a great deal of attention, but the religious issue was too good to leave alone for long. The clergy and other speakers returned again and again to the threat posed by the Roman pontiff. One of the featured non-clerical speakers at the People’s Temple addressed the issue of papal influence in the nation’s capital and in the nation. The *Standard’s* headline was, “Rome Denounced-The Hated Papal Flag Floats over Washington.”⁴⁴ The orator, an A.P.A. recruiter and organizer named Major T.C. Ryan of Columbus, Ohio, held up the hated flag and said “friends, go with me to Washington and look up to the heights of Georgetown. The Jesuit College is there.” Ryan pointed out that the papal flag flies on top of a dome at Georgetown and looks down on the U.S., Treasury Dept, Arlington Cemetery and the Washington Monument. “Every one of them is under the shadow of this infernal rag on Georgetown heights...we shall never be free until we bring down the walls of every convent in the land, of every monastery in the land and until bright, active American girls, today in slavery within convent walls shall be liberated.” The audience erupted in “tremendous applause.”

On another occasion at the People’s Temple in Boston, Ryan spoke about Rome and Patriotism.⁴⁵ “Romanism at the Baltimore Council declared it to be infidelity to say that all men are free and equal, and it declares that man has not the right to think for himself... Protestantism founds its institutions on the will of the people, but Romanism founds hers on the will of the Pope...Protestantism develops the mind of man, but Romanism crushes it out by compelling passive obedience and submission from babyhood. Protestantism rides on the car of progress, but Romanism would put us back in the middle ages.”

This major from Ohio was a professional A.P.A. organizer and recruiter and so a very public APAer, but most members and certainly

⁴⁴*Daily Standard*, April 22, 1895.

⁴⁵*Daily Standard*, May 20, 1895.

the *Boston Daily Standard*, preferred their affiliation to remain a secret. The *Standard* spoke to the issue of secrecy, acknowledging that there was criticism of secret patriotic societies. The paper raised the question on its editorial page: is not the secrecy of these new societies “contrary to the spirit of true Americanism? By no means. Secrecy is often necessary to success. The leader in any contest would be a fool to make known his plans to the enemy.”⁴⁶ The *Standard* continued, “The published principles of these patriotic fraternities commend themselves to every loyal citizen.”

These principles were included in a multi-faceted oath that members of the A.P.A. took, obligating them to religious, economic and political conflict. Members were required to swear to always “labor, plead and wage a continuous warfare against ignorance and fanaticism” and “to strike the shackles and chains of blind obedience to the Roman Catholic Church.”⁴⁷ APAers also swore to “do all in my power to retard and break down the power of the Pope.” Furthermore, in economic matters, APAers were bound to “promote the interests of all Protestants everywhere,” to not join strikes with Catholics, and to “not employ a Roman Catholic in any capacity, if I can procure the services of a Protestant.” Politically, all APAers undertook a covenant to “not countenance the nomination, in any caucus or convention, of a Roman Catholic” and to “vote only for a Protestant.” To these and other requirements an APAer would most solemnly swear, adding, “so help me God.” These principles were known to all, though the membership rolls were not. Also well known to the public was the fact that the “Little Red Schoolhouse” was the sign of the American Protective Association in its fight for the public schools.

The A.P.A. and its symbol drew great attention in Boston as the annual Independence Day celebrations drew near in 1895. An organized and increasingly aggressive series of convocations stirred up anti-Catholicism in Boston, leading to bloodshed and a riot in Boston on the 4th of July. That there was not more violence was fortunate. That there was any was clearly due to the A.P.A. and its supporters at the People’s Temple and in the *Boston Daily Standard*.

⁴⁶*Daily Standard*, April 29, 1895.

⁴⁷*Documents of American Catholic History*, ed T. Ellis, (Wilmington, Delaware, 1956), pp. 500-501.

On June 27, the *Standard* framed the central question for the drama: "Is the little red schoolhouse to suffer insult July 4?" Five East Boston men had decided to enter this symbol of Americanism and the A.P.A. in the city's parade commemorating the nation's birth. Their proposed float was to be fourteen feet long, seven feet wide and nine feet high; it would be drawn by four horses and would carry an American flag at its peak. The Carnival Association, responsible for the parade, refused to allow the float on the grounds that it was sectarian and that the A.P.A. was behind the float. As one Protestant on the ruling committee said, "You know as well as I that the little red schoolhouse is closely identified with a certain organization (referring to the A.P.A.). Its appearance would only cause trouble."⁴⁸

The question was, according to a *Standard* editorial: "Who Owns the Streets?" The paper argued that, next to Old Glory, no other symbol is so perfectly representative of our nation as the little red schoolhouse."⁴⁹ The paper addressed the accusation of sectarianism and the A.P.A. "Is there sectarianism in the public school? Then it is because some sect has declared itself, by word or deed, to be antagonistic to that institution. The very fear of trouble is a strong testimony to the truthfulness of the claim made by patriotic orders that the public school is in peril." Then, almost prophetically, the paper said, "Good citizens would not create a riot at sight of the little red schoolhouse. No Protestant church would protest against its appearance in any parade. Only hoodlums, toughs, aliens in blood and sentiment, men who fear or hate the principles taught in public schools, would lift voice or hand to oppose the peaceable progress of such a float."

This same *Standard* editorial also complained that in the June 17 parade celebrating the Battle of Bunker Hill, a priest had headed the Hibernian contingent and the man who represented Uncle Sam carried a green flag. The editorial stated that this was a double insult "by that traitorous body of men who had no legitimate place" in the parade and that if the little red schoolhouse does not appear on the 4th of July it would be seen that "The enemies of free speech, a free press and the public school are themselves proving the accusations made against them, and sealing their own doom."

⁴⁸*Daily Standard*, June 25, 1895.

⁴⁹*Daily Standard*, June 27, 1895.

Another *Boston Daily Standard* editorial likened the controversy to the question of slavery and Civil war. The conflict between the prelates of the Roman Catholic Church and the A.P.A. will be settled peacefully according to the American theory of government or “it will be referred to the stern arbitrament of a tribunal severed in its methods than the ballot-box.”⁵⁰

The ballot box had produced a board of aldermen, which voted 7-4 to allow an alternative parade, but a two-thirds vote was required.⁵¹ Failing this, the alternative parade organizers made an end run around the local authorities. They petitioned Gov. Greenhalge for support and he pointed out that they could have their own parade if they made no request to block the streets. The A.P.A. resolved, at a mass meeting on July 2, to hold a parade (also to be in East Boston), which would be technically sponsored by the Patriotic Order, Sons of America.⁵² The organizers of this separate parade invited Masons, Odd Fellows, Orangemen and the Knights of Pythias to join with them in the defense of what the *Standard* had called “the spirit of true Americanism.”

The A.P.A. *Standard* editorialized on the eve of the Independence Day parade that, “When the representation of a schoolhouse cannot be carried through the streets of Boston because some of the Pope’s Irish object it is time to do something more than blow trumpets and spout speeches.”⁵³ The A.P.A. was prepared to act and so were Irish Catholics and the Boston police. A force of 300 policemen was sent to East Boston on the day of the parade because of talk by a “certain element of making trouble and hints of gangs coming from Charlestown and the South Cove sections of Boston.”⁵⁴

The expected riot occurred.⁵⁵ The next day, the *Boston Daily Standard*, bore headlines that proclaimed, “Insults, Stones and Pistol

⁵⁰*Daily Standard*, July 1, 1895.

⁵¹*Daily Standard*, June 27, 1895.

⁵²*Daily Standard*, July 2 and 3, 1895.

⁵³*Daily Standard*, July 3, 1895.

⁵⁴*Daily Standard*, July 4, 1895.

⁵⁵*Globe*, July 5 and 6, 1895; *Herald*, July 5, 6, and 14, 1895.

Shots greet the great patriotic procession in the streets of Boston.”⁵⁶ It accused “a murderous gang of thugs, all of whom were Catholic,” of commencing the “fierce battle.” The riot, according to this paper, merely brought to the surface “that hatred that has so long been apparently dormant.” One Irish Catholic named John W. Willis was killed. Harold Brown of Roxbury and John Ross, Ulster-born resident of Cambridge, were both arrested in this death but later discharged.⁵⁷

Members of the A.P.A. convened an “indignation meeting” at Faneuil Hall to protest the attack on their parade. The meeting was held on July 10 and was guarded by 250 police. The A.P.A. paper argued that with the riot in East Boston “the mask has fallen from the face of Rome. The devilish features which struck terror into the souls of thousands in the days of the Inquisition now grit a hellish defiance to a free people.”⁵⁸ It continued, “There is no question as to the nationality and religion of the mob. The language used and the hatred of free institutions manifested betrayed the religion, and the cowardly methods of attack showed the nationality. They fight like wolves in packs. They shoot their victims in the back from behind hedges. They throw bricks and stones from a safe distance.”

The parade riot, mild though it may have been when compared to other episodes in nineteenth century urban America, seems to have punctured local enthusiasm for organized confrontations, and there is little evidence of religious and ethnic conflict being played out later that summer. The A.P.A. movement, nationally, also withered away, though the *Boston Daily Standard* continued publication into 1896. In late 1895, although a majority of the seats on the Boston school committee were “still retained by patriotic forces”⁵⁹ (according to Mrs. Eliza Trask Hill, a leader of this element), the Democrats won the mayoralty by putting forward the locally revered name of the Mugwump Josiah Quincy.

⁵⁶*Daily Standard*, July 5, 1895.

⁵⁷*Globe*, July 11, 13 and 14, 1895.

⁵⁸*Daily Standard*, July 5, 1895.

⁵⁹*Woman's Voice and Public School Champion*, December 14, 1895.

With Quincy's election, the years of the greatest and most effective anti-Catholic action were in the past. The Quincy administration, however, also saw the end of the Yankee-Irish Democratic coalition. In 1899, James Michael Curley won his first election and a new generation of politicians soon ran the city. Though the 1895 parade and the A.P.A. never entered the Boston Irish consciousness as deeply as the infamous Charlestown Convent Fire or the Broad Street Riot earlier in the century, Curley and his generation did not forget the anti-Catholicism and the A.P.A. of their youth.