

A "Wild Irishman" Under Every Federalist's Bed: Naturalization in Philadelphia, 1789-1806

JOHN ADAMS won the presidential election of 1796 by three thin electoral votes; his opponent, Thomas Jefferson, was forced to content himself for the moment with the vice-presidency.* Although the Virginian had advised his followers at first to adopt a wait-and-see attitude during the period that separated the election and the inauguration in hopes that Adams might return to his former simple republican principles, Jefferson, on taking the oath of office on March 4, 1797, almost immediately "plunged into the whirl of politics."¹ Philadelphia, the national capital, once again was the scene of bitter party feeling, and political passions intensified as spring gave way to summer. The Vice-President, for the first time, asserted his leadership of the Republican Party that had sprung up several years earlier in reaction to the Hamiltonian System, Washington's neutrality policy, and the Jay Treaty, and that had demonstrated surprising national strength in the election of 1796. James Madison and John Beckley, the chief architects of the Republican Party structure both in Congress and in the states, became his trusted lieutenants. These men continually conversed, argued, planned, and corresponded as to how the Federalist Party was to be driven from power. While the presidential election of 1800 was the dazzling prize they sought, there were important federal and state elections in 1798 and 1799 to be won. Great tasks lay

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¹ Noble E. Cunningham, Jr., *The Jeffersonian Republicans: The Formation of Party Organization, 1789-1801* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1957), 117.

before the Jeffersonian Republicans: the formulation and execution of congressional tactics and policy, the exposition of a simple and appealing political doctrine, the creation and subsidization of organs of political propaganda, the development of a more formal party organization with a base not only in Congress but also at various levels in the states, the re-election of capable and attractive candidates, and, most important of all, the cultivation of a large and loyal body of voters. Both contemporary observers and modern historians agree that a continuing and major source of Republican electoral strength from the early 1790's onward was provided by the votes of the foreign-born. Among this group none were more determined or effective in their support of the Jeffersonian Republican Party than the Irish of the seaport cities of Baltimore, New York, and Philadelphia.²

The American Revolution had checked for almost a decade the flood of Irish immigrants that had flowed into Philadelphia. As many as 4,000 Irish a year had arrived in Pennsylvania during the five years prior to 1776. With the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783, the traffic resumed once again on a somewhat reduced scale, but by 1791 the numbers returned to the pre-war level. Mathew Carey informed his friend John Chambers of Dublin³ that 3,000 to 4,000 of their countrymen had reached Philadelphia that summer and that "those with no friends suffer considerable at first."⁴ Carey was in a position to make such a statement as he was the Secretary of the Hibernian Society for the Relief of Emigrants from Ireland that had been established the previous year. One of the constitutional obligations of that body was for two of its members to visit every ship with passengers from Ireland and inquire as to the exact number of immigrants and to the conditions of their passage. For

² The author is presently completing a full-scale study of this relationship entitled "The Radical Irish and the Rise of the Jeffersonian Republicans, 1790-1800."

³ Chambers (1754-1837) was a leading radical printer and bookseller in Dublin. An old friend of Carey's from the Volunteer Movement days of 1781-1784, he was the great Philadelphia publisher's chief source of Irish political information. Chambers was a founding member of the Dublin Society of United Irishmen that attempted to secure for that unhappy nation political reform and religious toleration, first by legitimate and in 1798 revolutionary means.

⁴ Carey to John Chambers, Philadelphia, Sept. 9, 1791, Letter Book, Series One, I, Lea & Febiger Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

the balance of the 1790's, the Irish immigration continued to average about 3,000 persons a year.⁵ The vast majority of these were Ulster Presbyterians, but due to the civil and religious strife in Ireland in the closing years of the decade Catholics from both Ulster and the southern counties arrived in ever-growing numbers.⁶ It does not appear that these Irishmen automatically joined the Jeffersonian Republicans. Indeed, they were often firm supporters of the movement to draft and adopt the Constitution and the Hamiltonian program in its early stages. However, many of those who were Federalists broke with the party over its British trade policy and Jay's Treaty, which they saw as direct support of Ireland's oppressor, England. After 1795, as Irish politics became revolutionary and violent and liberation was in part dependent on French arms, the newcomers joined the opposition because of ideological sympathies, the Federalists' nativistic hostility, and the skillful recruiting of Jeffersonians such as Mathew Carey, Tench Coxe, William Duane, and John Beckley. As Professor Samuel Eliot Morison has written: "By 1798 the alliance between the native democracy and the Irish vote, which has endured to this day, was already cemented."⁷

This state of affairs was evident to a number of Federalists as early as the Jay Treaty conflict of 1795-1796. The Irish urban vote in the presidential election of 1796 indicated that some legislative device was needed to check the influx of foreigners or to disenfranchise for a long period of time those who arrived in "the asylum of Liberty," if the Federalists were to escape defeat in 1800 and political oblivion thereafter. Young Harrison Gray Otis, a Federalist

⁵ James Carey, Mathew's hot-tempered younger brother who became a radical Jeffersonian journalist in Philadelphia (1797-1800), gave the following Irish immigration statistics in a pamphlet attack on William Cobbett. He claimed that in the years 1783-1787 3,000 a year arrived from Londonderry alone, and that during 1787-1795 some 2,700 entered Philadelphia annually from Belfast and Londonderry. [James Carey], *A Pill for Porcupine: . . . a Vindication of the American, French, and Irish Characters Against his Scurrilities. By a Friend to Political Equality* (Philadelphia, Sept. 1, 1796), 35-38. While James' attack was best supported by these figures, those for the 1790's conform closely to those mentioned by Mathew in his private correspondence.

⁶ The Catholics may have accounted for 20% of the total in the years 1797-1800.

⁷ Samuel Eliot Morison, *Harrison Gray Otis, 1765-1848: The Urbane Federalist* (Boston, 1969), 107. See also for contemporary opinion in support of this view David Hackett Fischer, *The Revolution of American Conservatism: The Federalist Party in the Era of Jeffersonian Democracy* (New York, 1965), 223, n 54.

congressman from Boston, clearly stated this point of view when he wrote his wife that "If some means are not adopted to prevent the indiscriminate admission of wild Irishmen & others to the right of suffrage, there will soon be an end to liberty & property."⁸ In a special session of Congress in May, 1797, the Federalists openly voiced their fears of the alliance between the Republicans and the immigrants and proposed to lay a tax of twenty dollars on certificates of naturalization. This was a large sum for all but the moderately well-to-do immigrant to pay, and the Jeffersonians quickly attacked the measure for what it was and what the Naturalization Act of 1798 would be, a scheme to restrict immigration and thereby "to cut off an increasingly important source of Republican strength."⁹ On July 1, Harrison Gray Otis rose in Congress to deliver his famed "Wild Irish" speech in which he acknowledged the restrictive nature of the proposed legislation and defended its goals. Otis claimed the tax would "not affect those men who already have lands in this country, nor the deserving part of those who may seek an asylum in it," for they could always pay the levy with ease. It would, however, bar "the mass of vicious and disorganizing characters who can not live peaceably at home, and who, after unfurling the standard of rebellion in their own countries, may come hither to revolutionize ours." Otis did "not wish to invite hoards of wild Irishmen, nor the turbulent and disorderly of all parts of the world, to come here with a view to disturb our tranquility, after having succeeded in the overthrow of their own governments."¹⁰ The Federalist legislation was in the end defeated, but Otis and his "Wild Irish" speech had become infamous in the eyes of the Jeffersonians and their Irish supporters. Philadelphia's Republican newspapers, the *Aurora* and James Carey's *Daily Advertiser*, counterattacked violently, as did the *Boston Chronicle*, which promised that the "wild Irish" of that city would choose a new representative and never cast their votes for "Young Harry" again.¹¹

The Jeffersonian Republicans actually had won only a reprieve and not a victory. In a year's time, the Federalists passed into law

⁸ Quoted in Morison, 107.

⁹ James Morton Smith, *Freedom's Fetters: The Alien and Sedition Laws and American Civil Liberties* (Ithaca, N. Y., 1956), 23.

¹⁰ Quoted in Morison, 107-108.

¹¹ *Aurora*, July 3, Sept. 7, 1797; *Daily Advertiser*, July 3, 8, 15, Aug. 4 (reprinting of *Boston Chronicle* item), and Sept. 7, 1797.

one of the severest naturalization acts in the history of this nation together with the Alien and Sedition Acts, all as a result of the agitation against aliens. The political climate in America was prepared for this drastic legislation by reports that the United Irishmen were on the verge of raising a bloody revolution with French aid in Ireland,¹² by William Cobbett who assured the citizens of Philadelphia that a similar conspiracy, formulated by the American Society of United Irishmen containing 1,500 assassins, was about to explode in their city,¹³ and by the news of the XYZ Affair that appeared to lay bare for all to see the true nature and evil intentions of France. Professor James Morton Smith has made patently clear the political implications of this legislation in his magisterial study, *Freedom's Fetters: The Alien and Sedition Laws and American Civil Liberties*. Taken as a whole those laws were designed to limit political criticism of the Federalist administration and to deprive the Jeffersonian Republicans of the votes and voices of their alien supporters. Among this group, it was the Irish that the friends of order feared and despised the most.

How justified were these fears of the Federalists in political terms? The question of the Irish vote awaits a full and final analysis although it has seemed probable that the Philadelphia Hibernians went strongly and often decisively for the Republican ticket in the second half of the 1790's. Naturalization records provide a hitherto unused source of historical information bearing on this subject.

During the New Deal, a group of Works Projects Administration researchers produced an alphabetical *Index to Records of Aliens' Declarations of Intention and/or Oaths of Allegiance, 1789-1880* of those courts, federal, state, and city, which participated in the naturalization of foreigners in Philadelphia.¹⁴ Each entry includes the applicant's name, his country of former allegiance, the court or courts of record in which the Declaration of Intention was made and/or the Oath of Allegiance was administered, and, finally, the

¹² The Irish Rebellion of 1798 did not, in fact, break out until May 23, and the first news of events did not appear in the Philadelphia papers until August 11.

¹³ William Cobbett, *Detection of a Conspiracy formed by the United Irishmen, with the Evident Intention of Aiding the Tyrants of France in Subverting the Government of the United States* (Philadelphia, May 6, 1798).

¹⁴ United States Work Projects Administration, *Index to Records of Aliens' Declarations of Intention and/or Oaths of Allegiance, 1789-1880*, in *United States Circuit Court, United States District Court, Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, Quarter Sessions Court, Court of Common*

dates of both the Declaration and the Oath.¹⁵ The *Index* consists of 3,443 pages with approximately twenty-eight entries per page, or a grand total of about 96,404 naturalization proceedings completed in the ninety-year period. It is necessary to review briefly the federal naturalization and Pennsylvania's suffrage laws to comprehend these findings more fully.

The Federal Constitution of 1787 gave Congress the authority to make uniform laws for the regulation of naturalization, a power which until then had been that of the several states. On March 26, 1790, the first naturalization act was approved by President Washington. This simple law merely stated that any alien of good character, having resided two years in the United States and one year in a particular state, could be admitted to citizenship upon application to any common law court of record in the state of his residence. The Naturalization Act of 1795, enacted on January 29 of that year, was more complex, and was supported by both parties.¹⁶ A five-year residence in America together with a one-year state sojourn now became mandatory together with a declaration of intention made three years prior to admission to citizenship. The judicial bodies available now were specified as being the state supreme, superior, and district, the territorial, and federal circuit and district courts. Excepted from the above were those resident when the law was passed who might secure naturalization after two years in America and one year in a particular state. The law of June 18, 1798, as noted above, was the Federalists' great effort to exclude the republican immigrant from the political life of the nation for the foreseeable future.¹⁷ This act required fourteen years federal

Pleas, Philadelphia. Compiled by Work Projects Administration, Project No. 20837. Sponsored by Pennsylvania Historical Commission (Harrisburg, 1940?), 11 vols.; Section II, Alphabetical Index of Naturalization Records, 1794-1880, of Maritime Records Port of Philadelphia.

¹⁵ Patience is required to investigate a specific time span as the *Index* is arranged alphabetically and must therefore be searched in its entirety. The WPA workers created a point of confusion by combining the categories of nation of birth and country of former allegiance, whereby all natives of Ireland are recorded as having owed allegiance to Great Britain and Ireland, those of England to England, and those of Scotland to that country. Extensive sampling proved that only the Irish are noted as having owed allegiance to Great Britain and Ireland.

¹⁶ The Federalists were already fearful of the democratic "disorganizers" who were flocking to America, and the Jeffersonian Republicans were equally suspicious of the aristocratic French immigrants who were making their appearance.

¹⁷ See Smith, chapter III, "Nativism, Politics, and Naturalization."

and five years state or territorial residence and a declaration of intention made five years prior to admission. Also, for the first time, aliens were required to register upon arrival or if already in the United States within a certain time after the passage of the act. During the debates on this legislation, Congressman Otis moved that naturalized citizens be barred from office holding, and Samuel Sewall of Massachusetts, chairman of the drafting committee, "thought it especially imprudent to make Irishmen eligible to hold seats in the government after a residence of five years because of the 'present distracted state of the country from whence they have emigrated.'" ¹⁸ The Republicans, with the support of frontier Federalists, turned back these attacks and were able to salvage two important exceptions favoring a certain group of immigrants. First, aliens who had entered the United States before passage of the 1795 act, might secure naturalization for one year after the enactment of the present law or until June 18, 1799. Second, aliens who had made their declaration of intention under the 1795 law were required to complete naturalization within four years of their declarations, the maximum date being June 17, 1802. A year after Jefferson gained the presidency he signed into law on April 14 the Naturalization Act of 1802 which re-enacted the more democratic law of 1795 modified by two exceptions. Aliens resident in the United States prior to the 1795 act with two years federal and one year state residence might become citizens at once. Those resident between the 1795 and 1798 act might claim citizenship within the next two years or until April 14, 1804. Finally, the Jeffersonians liberalized the law even further in 1804 by allowing those aliens resident between the 1798 and 1802 acts to be admitted under the latter act without a previous declaration of intention.

The Pennsylvania Constitution of 1790 was extremely favorable to aliens as its "Liberal franchise privileges allowed any white freeman to vote who had resided in the Commonwealth for two years preceding an election and paid State or county taxes assessed at least six months before exercising the suffrage."¹⁹ In the middle of the 1790's, it became common practice for Republican merchants to pay some of the immigrant's taxes and thus attempt to control

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁹ Harry M. Tinkcom, *The Republicans and Federalists in Pennsylvania 1790-1810: A Study in National Stimulus and Local Response* (Harrisburg, 1950), 16.

the vote in Philadelphia.²⁰ The Federalists attempted in 1797 to deny the franchise to anyone considered an alien under the terms of the Naturalization Act of 1795 or who was unable to prove some previous mode of naturalization. Governor Mifflin vetoed the bill that was presented to him by the legislature.²¹ The attendant newspaper debate alerted politically oriented aliens to the necessity of securing citizenship. Mifflin approved a revised bill on February 15, 1799, which gave the vote to male citizens twenty-one years of age who satisfied the requirements of the 1790 Constitution. Proof of citizenship, whether by birth, residence, or naturalization, was also demanded of all who claimed the vote.

Turning to the tabulation of Irish and non-Irish aliens listed in the *Index* as naturalized in Philadelphia, 1789-1806, we find the following statistics:

	<i>Irish</i>	<i>All others</i>
1789	2	—
1790	3	2
1791	—	1
1792	1	—
1793	3	3
1794	6	30
1795	45	90
1796	60	107
1797	25	67
1798	564	374
1799	306	160
1800	6	3
1801	8	3
1802	444	143
1803	59	119
1804	72	141
1805	91	107
1806	212	157
TOTAL	1,907	1,507

²⁰ Stephen Girard's records indicate that he engaged in this practice in 1798 when Israel Israel was defeated in a re-run election for a State Senate seat representing Philadelphia and Delaware Counties. The first time around Israel Israel appeared to have defeated his Federalist opponent, but that party forced a second election on the grounds that certain polls were illegally located and that noncitizens had been allowed to vote and had provided the Republican's margin of victory. John Bach McMaster, *The Life and Times of Stephen Girard, Mariner and Merchant* (Philadelphia and London, 1918), I, 351-353.

²¹ The 1797 bill, although vetoed by the governor, emboldened a Federalist judge in Philadelphia to deny the vote to several Republican merchants who had not conformed to

The Irish thus constituted an amazingly high proportion of all aliens naturalized: 55% of 1789-1800, 57% of 1801-1806, and 56% of the entire period 1789-1806. After 1797, the total number of Irish granted citizenship was greater than all other nationalities combined. The four extraordinary years of 1798, 1799, 1802, and 1806, each of which witnessed the Irish exceeding the total of all others, saw 1,526 Irish aliens naturalized or 80% of all the Irish and 45% of all the aliens who are recorded in the *Index* as becoming Americans in Philadelphia during the years under discussion.

When these figures are considered together with the known pattern of immigration and the reported Irish vote of the 1790's, the Federalists' hostile attitude toward them in Philadelphia is understandable. But there was a national impact also; New England Federalists serving in Philadelphia were exposed for the first time to the radical Irish and became the staunchest supporters of the policy of exclusion, even though relatively few Irishmen were then immigrating to points north of New York. On the other hand, the figures for 1798 and 1799 indicate the aliens' fear of the Federalists' policy represented by the Naturalization Act and the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798. It is evident that there was a high potential for future Irish political participation both as voters and officeholders.²²

The author selected the years 1789-1806 for analysis because they encompassed, with the exception of 1806, the period when naturalization proceedings were commenced and completed by aliens who came to America prior to Jefferson's presidential inauguration on March 4, 1801.²³ The year 1806 was the first in which an immi-

terms of the federal Naturalization Act of 1795 but had previously attained American registry for their ships on the grounds that their Pennsylvania naturalization also endowed them with American citizenship. George Frank Franklin, *The Legislative History of Naturalization in the United States From the Revolutionary War to 1861* (Chicago, 1906), 85.

²² The Republican Party not only welcomed the votes of the Irish but was also receptive to their candidacy for public office. In the middle states, the Jeffersonians elected significant numbers of Irishmen (natives and descendants) to the House of Representatives: 13% of the Republican congressmen from that area were Irish as opposed to 6% for the Federalists. On a national scale, the ratio was 14% to 4%. See Paul Goodman, "Social Status of Party Leadership: The House of Representatives, 1797-1804," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., XXV (1968), 466-467.

²³ This is not to imply that all those naturalized during this period arrived in the United States in the Federalist era. Mathew Carey settled in Philadelphia in November, 1784.

grant arriving during the Virginian's tenure of office could have been naturalized. Thus these years reveal the naturalization policies of both parties in action.

The profile of these statistics was governed by the legal requirements of the naturalization laws, foreign and national political pressures, and to some degree economic instability in Ireland at the end of the decade. The sparse returns under the first naturalization act reflect the fact that great numbers of Americans were ignorant of this legislation or assumed that state naturalization was equal to that of the Federal Government. The rise of naturalization during 1798 and 1799 was caused by the odd functioning of both the 1795 and 1798 acts and the climate of political hysteria then prevalent. The massive figure of 1,404 naturalizations in those two years (1798 and 1799) also indicates to the author that the Republican leadership of Philadelphia when faced with the Pennsylvania Suffrage Bill of 1797 and the Suffrage Act of 1799 diligently preached the value of naturalization among the city's immigrant groups. A Jeffersonian feast followed the Federalist famine of 1800 and 1801. The figures of 1806 reflect the naturalization of the first batch of immigrants to enter the United States following the Irish Rebellion of 1798 and the Republican Revolution of 1800.

These statistics when studied in conjunction with the recent work of Professors Everett S. Lee, George Rogers Taylor, and Sam Bass Warner, Jr.,²⁴ on the population growth and distribution of late colonial and early national Philadelphia provide the basis for some theoretical speculation concerning the contribution of the immigrant Irish to the growth of the city and the nature of their continued westward migrations. It should be noted that a few of the naturalized

He became a citizen of Pennsylvania, voted in elections, and considered himself a citizen of the United States. Nevertheless, Carey, with talk of the Federalists' program of repression in the wind, went before his friend and fellow officer of the Hibernian Society, Thomas McKean, Chief Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, and was naturalized on Feb. 20, 1798. When Cobbett began his United Irish "hunt" three months later, James Carey followed his brother's example in the federal District Court on May 25.

²⁴ Everett S. Lee and Michael Lalli, "Population," George Rogers Taylor "Comment on Population," and "Discussion of 'Population'" in *The Growth of the Seaport Cities, 1790-1825*, David T. Gilchrist, ed. (Charlottesville, Va., 1967), 25-37, 38-46, 47-53. Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of its Growth* (Philadelphia, 1968), and "If All the World Were Philadelphia, 1774-1930," *American Historical Review*, LXXIV (1968), 26-43.

Irish that constitute these figures may not have been residents of Philadelphia, the Northern Liberties, Southwark and nearby towns, but it is fair to assume that the percentage of all Irish naturalized was the same as all Philadelphia Irish naturalized in those years.²⁵ A more speculative assumption upon which most of what follows is partially based is that, in the case of the Irish, the percentage of naturalization was roughly equal to the percentage of immigration. Thus they accounted for 56% of all the aliens entering Philadelphia as well as 56% of those becoming citizens.²⁶

Lee believes that the natural growth rate for urban centers for this period was not greater than 20% in a decade; thus foreign and/or domestic migration into the cities caused any growth greater than 20%. As Lee also states that domestic in-migration was balanced by domestic out-migration, all growth exceeding 20% was a result of immigration.²⁷ Given the heavy loss of life from yellow fever during the 1790's, Lee's estimate of the rate of natural growth is high for Philadelphia and the immigration growth rate low. Professor Lee graciously consulted with the author on this point and concluded that if more than 5,000 persons perished in the great 1793 epidemic and 3,000 in 1797 alone,²⁸ the natural growth rate would not have exceeded 10% for the decade; in such a case, all growth beyond 10% might reasonably be assigned to immigration. Applying Lee's formula to Taylor's figures for the population of

²⁵ The aliens naturally sought naturalization in a court nearest to their homes where they were known. Proof of residence could not be supported by the applicant's own oath. Thus, the applicant sought a friend to swear to his continued residence, and it is doubtful such a person would travel far to do so. The Pennsylvania Act of Apr. 13, 1791, established courts in conformity with the new 1790 Constitution, and provided for accessible courts of common pleas in which aliens could be naturalized.

²⁶ This assumption is based on a number of contemporary statements which place the Irish immigration anywhere from 45% to 60% of all immigration into Philadelphia. Scattered alien registration returns for a slightly later period indicate that the Irish accounted for even a higher percentage of the total. It is not logical that the Irish, who were universally described as representing the lower economic and social levels of this traffic, would have sought citizenship in greater degree than their percentage of the total immigration. The author thus judges that the Irish represented *at least* 56% of all aliens entering. In the statistical projections that follow, the Irish percentage of the total immigration for the entire period (56%) is used rather than that of the years 1789-1800 (55%).

²⁷ Lee, "Population," 32-33; "Discussion," 50-51.

²⁸ J. H. Powell, *Bring out your Dead: The Great Plague of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia in 1793* (Philadelphia, 1949), 281-282; Warner, 103.

Philadelphia, the Northern Liberties, and Southwark and their rate of increase, 1790-1800,²⁹ it would appear the immigrant Irish accounted, theoretically, for the growth of Philadelphia and its suburbs in the following manner:³⁰

	1790	1800	Growth by Immigration	Growth by Irish Immigration
PHILADELPHIA	28,522	41,220	9,846	5,514
% of increase		44.5	35.0	19.0
NORTHERN LIBERTIES	9,913	10,718	—	—
		8.1	—	—
SOUTHWARK	5,661	9,621	3,394	1,901
		70.0	60.0	33.6
PHILADELPHIA incl. suburbs	44,096	61,559	13,240	7,415
		39.6	30.0	16.8

These figures represent a hypothetical rather than an absolute projection of where growth due to immigration occurred. They do suggest that on the eve of Jefferson's presidential victory Irish immigrants may well have accounted for 12% of the total population of greater Philadelphia. Every eighth person Harrison Gray Otis met on the street might have been a "wild Irishman" who had reached Philadelphia within the decade. Think of "Young Harry's" displeasure when he ventured into Southwark where every fifth individual might have hailed from Belfast or Dublin.³¹

²⁹ Taylor, TABLE V: Population of four leading U. S. cities and their suburbs showing the decennial rate of increase, 1790-1840, "Comment," 39.

³⁰ The author wishes to thank Professor Lee of the Sociology Department of the University of Massachusetts for his aid, and also Professor Donald R. McNeil of the Statistics Department of The Johns Hopkins University who provided him with the formula employed in computing the growth and percentage of population increase attributed to immigration. The base figure of 1790 is combined with 10% of the base figure to ascertain the decade's natural growth. This is subtracted from the base figure of 1800 to find the amount of immigrant growth. 56% of this figure represents the amount of Irish immigrant growth. The base figure of 1790 is then divided into these latter figures to determine the percentage of population increase caused by all immigration and Irish immigration during these years.

³¹ Warner in his provocative work on Philadelphia points out that in "1774 the special locations of the laborers were the northern and southern edges of town—the Northern Liberties and the adjacent parts of the Mulberry Ward and Southwark." The Northern Liberties and the area north of Market Street were largely populated with German immigrants, their descendants, and Quakers. Warner, 13-14. The same pattern continued until 1790 when the population of the Northern Liberties stabilized and that of Southwark boomed. The Irish, who had exhibited slight ethnic clustering prior to the Revolution, commenced settling in Southwark in significant numbers when the war ended.

James and Mathew Carey both claimed that 27,000 or more Irishmen landed in Philadelphia or nearby ports in the 1790's. How many of these pushed on to Ohio or Tennessee or joined their relations in western Pennsylvania? How many from the urban centers of Ulster elected to try their luck in the more familiar environment of Philadelphia? As the official record of immigration to the United States began in 1819, any statements concerning the influx of aliens during an earlier period are to be regarded with a certain degree of skepticism. Yet Mathew Carey was an avid and accurate collector of such data, and this was a subject that both greatly concerned and interested him. Given the decade's mortality rate, if 7,415 of these Irishmen were living in the city at the turn of the century, then roughly 10,000 had settled there during these years.³² Thus, approximately a third of the arrivals remained in Philadelphia, and two-thirds continued westward. Five years prior to the Revolution Irishmen had arrived at the same rate later witnessed in the 1790's, but far fewer of them settled in the city. Certainly an important phenomenon of the latter period was the high degree of urban orientation exhibited by these immigrants.

The naturalization of 1,021 Irishmen in the years 1789-1800 had a profound impact on the political life of the city. What the Federalists viewed with horror the Jeffersonians surveyed with hope. Here was an electoral potential to be destroyed or utilized depending on one's political persuasion. After the catastrophe of 1800, younger Federalists concealed their distaste of the Irish and actively courted those very Hibernian votes that had helped to drive the party of Washington and Adams from the high places of power.³³ In Philadelphia, Federalists reversed themselves completely, and included in their party structure a "committee to aid the naturalization of foreigners."³⁴ This, however, was perhaps not the first time the Philadelphia Federalists had challenged the Republican control of the Irish vote. The returns of the 1796 presidential and 1799 gubernatorial elections when considered with the above statistics on population growth

³² This figure is based on the theory that those alive in 1800 represented 75% of those who settled in the city if the death rate for the decade was about 2.5% per year.

³³ Fischer, 163-164.

³⁴ Sanford Higginbotham, *The Keystone in the Democratic Arch: Pennsylvania Politics, 1800-1816* (Harrisburg, 1952), 282, quoted in *ibid.*, 164.

suggest such an effort was made, and failed in Southwark during the latter contest.

Southwark's population increased in the 1790's more than any other section of greater Philadelphia. Theoretically, its 70% overall rise was caused largely by the influx of nearly 3,400 new immigrants, 1,900 of whom were Irish. This should have been a Republican stronghold, and so it was. Nevertheless, the Federalists did not concede the area without a fight. The 1796 election, which pitted Jefferson against Adams, and the 1799 contest between McKean and James Ross were similar in their appeal to the Irish immigrants of Southwark. Jay's Treaty was attacked by Hibernians, both native and American born, as a direct blow against Ireland's hopes for freedom. In the 1799 campaign, the United Irish question was a key issue, and, in defeat, the Federalists attributed their downfall to a coalition of Irish and German voters that functioned successfully both in Philadelphia and throughout the state.³⁵ The Southwark Republicans polled 91% of the 512 ballots cast in 1796; in 1799, they received 73% of 812 votes.³⁶ Thus, in three years the total vote increased by 58% and the Republicans' share of that vote decreased by 18% while the population grew by 21%.³⁷ What does such an occurrence suggest?

First of all, it should be noted that the Jeffersonians continued to win easily, increasing their 1796 total by 130 votes or by 28% which was slightly in advance of the population rise. Ross may have been more attractive to some voters than Adams had been, and the issues were, in part, different. What these figures suggest to the author is that a great deal of political activity on the part of both

³⁵ *Aurora*, Oct. 15, Nov. 30, 1799.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Nov. 7, 1796; Oct. 9, 1799.

³⁷ The 812 total ballots of 1799 represented a heavy vote in Southwark where more than a third of the population were recent immigrants. In 1800, the free white adult males constituted 22% of the entire population. Taylor, TABLE IV: Population of the seaport cities by sex, age, color, and slave status, 1790-1830, "Comment," 34-35. Thus in 1799, there were less than 2,000 of this category whose age and race would have met those two voting requirements. This number was then sharply reduced by those who failed to qualify because of noncitizenship, nonresidence, or failure to pay the necessary taxes. While the participation of those qualified to vote in Southwark was high, its percentage of all free male adults voting was about 10% below the amazing 56% recorded by the state in that election. See J. R. Pole, *Political Representation in England and the Origin of the American Revolution* (New York 1966), 553.

parties took place in Southwark following the 1796 election. It was there, in December of 1797, Israel Israel had found the alien votes that had illegally elected him to the state Senate.³⁸ Thus the Federalists' drive to bar aliens from the polls must have been a key factor in this struggle. Certainly they made use of the Election Act of 1799 which denied the franchise to all but citizens. But their effort was not merely negative, they must have appealed for new supporters successfully as they added thirty-five more voters to their list than did the Republicans. That party's tally in 1796 doubtless contained numerous alien votes, and its leaders must have worked hard to have as many as possible of their alien followers naturalized in 1798 and 1799. Who can tell to what extent the Republicans' "legitimate" vote advanced in these years? Thus the picture evoked by these statistics is one of both parties deeply involved in the political wars of Southwark: the Republicans enjoying a marked natural advantage, the Federalists pressing the attack even in hostile territory.

The Federalist press once more conjured up the specter of a United Irish rebellion as the year of hysteria, 1798, came to an end. Both Cobbett and John Ward Fenno again attacked the Irish and their leaders with a stream of scurrilous abuse, and implied that both Mathew and James Carey were actively engaged with William Duane, John Daly Burk, and others in planning to subvert the government of the United States. The elder Carey for a while ignored these accusations which laid him open to prosecution under the Sedition Act. Then in January, he turned on his tormentors with a polemic assault that helped destroy the Porcupine as a useful tool of the Federalists. Reviewing the abuse and slander that the English journalist had heaped upon Ireland and her sons, Mathew Carey charged Cobbett to beware, as 30,000 Irishmen in Philadelphia held him accountable for his crimes against their nation and their reputations.³⁹

Mathew Carey's claim may have been excessive, but there were many of his kind in every quarter of his adopted city. Predominantly Protestant and lower middle class, they assimilated quickly into the mainstream of American society, escaping most of the

³⁸ Tinckom, 178.

³⁹ Mathew Carey, *To the Public* (Philadelphia, Feb. 5, 1799).

nativistic prejudice that was leveled against the Catholic Irish who followed them a third of a century later. But in the 1790's their lot was not always easy. The wellborn of Philadelphia knew only of these Irishmen that their songs were too loud, their liquor too strong, and their politics too Republican. Indeed, who can blame a man of property if, upon finishing Cobbett's *Detection of a Conspiracy formed by the United Irishmen*, he glanced quickly beneath his bed before snuffing out the candle.

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