

The Rise and Fall of Repeal: Slavery and Irish Nationalism in Antebellum Philadelphia

DURING THE SUMMER OF 1843, the Irish leader Daniel O'Connell's nationalist campaign reached a fever pitch in his homeland. Pressing for the Repeal of the Act of Union, which incorporated Ireland into Great Britain, O'Connell and his supporters staged enormous rallies, which the London *Times* derided as "monster meetings." In the beginning of 1843 O'Connell had solemnly assured his followers that this would be the "Repeal Year," and after one million supporters cheered him on at a rally in August, it seemed that Ireland might very well have its own parliament before long.¹

In the United States, however, the Repeal movement was in turmoil. While branches of the Loyal National Repeal Association had been established throughout the country in 1840–41 and thousands of dollars had been sent over to O'Connell's headquarters in Dublin, by 1843 many Irish American Repealers had grown disenchanted with O'Connell because of his repeated attacks on American slavery. An ardent abolitionist, O'Connell had time and again drawn parallels between the oppressive conditions endured by Irish farm laborers and American slaves. These statements placed most Irish Americans in an awkward position. They were generally affiliated with the Democratic Party, which was proimmigrant but also proslavery and antagonistic to free African Americans. Few Irish Americans wanted to disturb their alliance with the Democrats and fewer still wanted to heed O'Connell's call to unite with the abolitionists,

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¹ See Lawrence McCaffrey, *Daniel O'Connell and the Repeal Year* (Lexington, KY, 1966), 31; Oliver MacDonagh, *The Emancipist: Daniel O'Connell, 1830–1847* (New York, 1989), 229–30.

who were viewed as fanatics by most Americans.²

In some southern cities, Repealers were so enraged by O'Connell's speeches that they disbanded their organizations. In northern cities, Repealers soldiered on with the cause, either ignoring O'Connell's statements on slavery or publicly disavowing them. Only in Philadelphia, a stronghold of Repeal, did Repealers make any effort to defend O'Connell's pronouncements on slavery. Philadelphia had a large, religiously mixed Irish community and its leaders held a range of views on political questions.³ Consequently, when O'Connell intensified his attacks on American slavery in 1843, the Philadelphia Repeal Association split into two factions. One group, led by Judge Joseph Doran, backed O'Connell on slavery, while the other organization, led by William Stokes, a lawyer and Democratic politician, and Robert Tyler, the slaveholding son of the president, sought to distance itself from O'Connell's abolitionism.⁴ O'Connell was pleased to hear of the Philadelphia split: at last some Irish Americans were endorsing his views on slavery. However, the support would prove short-lived, as Irish Catholics in Philadelphia soon found themselves under fierce attack from nativists in the "Bible Riots." In the wake of the riots, the city's Irish community turned away from O'Connell and Repeal and focused on its own preservation.

O'Connell's Campaigns

O'Connell's career was at its peak in the early 1840s. He had gained immense popularity throughout Ireland in the 1820s as a result of his tire-

² Gilbert Osofsky, "Abolitionists, Irish Immigrants and the Dilemmas of Romantic Nationalism," *American Historical Review* 80 (1975): 900–901; Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish: A History* (Harlow, Eng., 2000), 83–87. For the Democrats' aggressive defense of slavery and negrophobia, see Jean H. Baker, *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY, 1983), 248–49; David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York, 1991), 130–34.

³ Dennis Clark, *The Irish in Philadelphia: Ten Generations of the Urban Experience* (Philadelphia, 1973), 11–20; Kerby A. Miller et al., *Irish Immigrants in the Land of Canaan: Letters and Memoirs from Colonial and Revolutionary America, 1675–1815* (New York, 2003), 287–313.

⁴ Several historians have briefly discussed this quarrel. Both Noel Ignatiev and Michael Feldberg see the split as having more to do with personalities than political principles. See Ignatiev, *How the Irish became White* (New York, 1995), 26–28; Feldberg, *The Philadelphia Riots of 1844: A Study of Ethnic Conflict* (Westport, CT, 1975), 29–30. The issue is also touched upon by Peter Sheridan, "The Immigrant in Philadelphia, 1827–1860" (MA thesis, Georgetown University, 1957), 187–94, and by Clark, *Irish in Philadelphia*, 19. Neither Sheridan nor Clark offers a clear judgment on the roots of the split.

less campaigning for Catholic Emancipation.⁵ In 1829 his long struggle had come to an end when Great Britain's prime minister, the Duke of Wellington, grudgingly allowed Catholics to sit in the British parliament. O'Connell immediately took advantage of the legislation and became a leading figure in the House of Commons.

As his Catholic Emancipation campaign gathered momentum in the late 1820s, O'Connell counted on support from America, just as he would later with Repeal. Sympathizers formed Friends of Ireland societies in twenty-four cities throughout the country and raised nearly ten thousand dollars for the cause.⁶ After New York City, Philadelphia had the largest and most active Friends of Ireland chapter. A leading figure in the Philadelphia society was Joseph Doran, a young lawyer who was interested in bringing all the chapters together in a national convention.⁷ Doran believed that such a show of force would "strike terror into the hearts . . . [of those] opposed to Emancipation."⁸ Doran's idea never came to fruition because Catholic Emancipation was granted soon after he made his proposal. One by one the chapters dissolved in 1829.

Before dissolving themselves, the New York and Philadelphia chapters each staged grand banquets. In New York, the mayor and several congressmen attended a St. Patrick's Day dinner. The keynote speaker, William MacNeven, a distinguished doctor and revered veteran of the 1798 United Irishmen Rising, followed O'Connell's practice and linked the struggle of Irish Catholics with that of African slaves and all other oppressed peoples.⁹ In Philadelphia, 350 Friends of Ireland attended a dinner celebrating O'Connell's victory. The mayor showed his support by ordering the Liberty Bell rung on the day the legislation was enacted. Catholics arranged for a Mass of Thanksgiving to be offered in St. Augustine's Church. The celebrant was Father John Hughes, a recently ordained Irish immigrant. Preaching to a large crowd, Hughes dedicated his sermon to O'Connell and then he too proceeded to compare the hard-

⁵ Catholic Emancipation allowed Catholics to sit in the British parliament for the first time since the Protestant Reformation.

⁶ Thomas F. Moriarity, "The Irish American Response to Catholic Emancipation," *Catholic Historical Review* 64 (1980): 366, 372.

⁷ Doran was treasurer of the society. See Joseph M. Doran to William Whelan, Mar. 18 and May 29, 1829, Library Company of Philadelphia, housed at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁸ Quoted in Moriarity, "Irish American Response to Catholic Emancipation," 366.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 368; For MacNeven, see David A. Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States: Immigrant Radicals in the Early Republic* (Ithaca, NY, 1998), 156–58.

ships suffered by Irish Catholics with those experienced by African slaves.¹⁰

Neither MacNeven's speech nor Hughes's sermon appears to have sparked any controversy. For decades, prominent Irish Americans had been expressing opposition to slavery in one manner or another. George Bryan, a Presbyterian immigrant from Dublin, helped frame Pennsylvania's 1780 Gradual Abolition Act. Thomas Emmet, a New York attorney and former secretary of the United Irishmen, devoted much of his legal practice to defending escaped slaves. Charles Carroll, who signed the Declaration of Independence, and Philadelphia publisher Mathew Carey were both active in the American Colonization Society, which sought to send free African Americans and newly manumitted slaves to colonies in western Africa.¹¹ John Carroll, America's first Catholic bishop and cousin of Charles Carroll, freed his slaves before his death in 1815.¹² Furthermore, ordinary Irish Americans appear to have been well disposed to free blacks. In northern cities, Irish Americans often lived side by side with African Americans with little difficulty into the 1830s.¹³ By the 1840s, however, America's political landscape had changed dramatically and Irish American views on race and slavery had shifted along with those of the rest of the country.

"Unconstitutional and Wicked" Tactics

Several developments during the 1830s exacerbated racial tensions and contributed to a polarization of the nation on the issue of slavery. First, some opponents of slavery who were dissatisfied with the colonizationists'

¹⁰ Moriarity, "Irish American Response to Catholic Emancipation," 370; Lawrence Kehoe, ed. *The Complete Works of the Most Reverend John Hughes, D.D.* (New York, 1864), 1:29; Richard Shaw, *Dagger John: The Unquiet Life and Times of Archbishop John Hughes of New York* (New York, 1977), 58. As a young man Hughes wrote antislavery poems. See Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, vol.1, *Racial Oppression and Social Control* (London, 1994), 168–69; Shaw, *Dagger John*, 334.

¹¹ Madeline Hooke Rice, *American Catholic Opinion in the Slavery Controversy* (New York, 1944), 53; Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States*, 138–39. For Bryan and Emmet, see Miller et al., *Irish Immigrants in the Land of Canaan*, 480–87, 608–12. For Carey's life, see Jay P. Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism* (New York, 2002), 15–20.

¹² Robert Emmett Curran, "Rome, the American Church and Slavery," in *Building the Church in America: Studies in Honor of Monsignor Robert F. Trisco on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Joseph C. Linck and Raymond J. Kupke (Washington, DC, 1999), 35; John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York, 2003), 49.

¹³ Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, 134; Elizabeth M. Geffen, "Violence in Philadelphia in the 1840s and 1850s," *Pennsylvania History* 36 (1969): 386.

approach began to agitate for the immediate abolition of slavery. In 1831, William Lloyd Garrison established an influential abolitionist newspaper, the *Liberator*, and two years later, in Philadelphia, he helped to form the American Anti-Slavery Society (AAS), a national organization that called for immediate abolition.¹⁴ Philadelphia was a logical site for the AAS's inaugural meeting because of its large free black population and its sizable Quaker community. While the abolitionists got along well with each other, they were met with insults on the streets of Philadelphia because of the interracial nature of their gathering.¹⁵

In 1835, the AAS tried to press its case through the mail by sending hundreds of thousands of antislavery pamphlets from New York City into the slave states. For proslavery white southerners, who were still reeling from Nat Turner's bloody slave insurrection of 1831, the mailings were an incendiary act. As soon as the mailbags arrived in Charleston, South Carolina, a mob stoned the post office and burned them all. Some Philadelphians responded angrily, too, dumping boxes of tracts into the Delaware River as Mayor John Swift watched approvingly. For recourse, abolitionists dared not turn to Andrew Jackson's Democratic administration. Jackson endorsed the postmaster general's efforts to block distribution of the tracts and told Congress that he considered the publications "unconstitutional and wicked."¹⁶ The following year the Democratic Party officially backed slavery in its national platform.¹⁷ In 1838 Democrats in Pennsylvania succeeded in disenfranchising free black men. By 1840, only five of the twenty-six states allowed black men to vote.¹⁸

Worse still for the abolitionists, some proslavery northerners responded violently to their activism. In 1834 serious riots occurred in New York City over several days; smaller outbreaks occurred in New Jersey, Connecticut, and New Hampshire.¹⁹ In 1835 Garrison barely escaped a

¹⁴ Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York, 1998), 106–13, 171–77.

¹⁵ Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720–1840* (Cambridge, MA, 1988), 277; Mayer, *All on Fire*, 174.

¹⁶ Quoted in Merton Dillon, *The Abolitionists: The Growth of a Dissenting Minority* (New York, 1974), 90; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 277.

¹⁷ See Joel H. Silbey, *The Partisan Imperative: The Dynamics of American Politics before the Civil War* (New York, 1985), 89–92.

¹⁸ Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in America* (New York, 2000), 55–59, 354; Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790–1860* (Chicago, 1961), 77–87.

¹⁹ For the New York City riots, see Tyler Anbinder, *Five Points: The 19th-Century New York City Neighborhood That Invented Tap Dance, Stole Elections, and Became the World's Most*

mob of wealthy Bostonians.²⁰ Three years later, in Philadelphia, an enraged mob, which was at least partially Irish, burned Pennsylvania Hall to the ground.²¹ This grand five-story building, which had been completed just weeks earlier as an abolitionist meeting place, was set ablaze following a meeting of black and white abolitionists that sparked fears of “amalgamation.”²²

Nor was this the end of the trouble in Philadelphia. The city’s Catholic bishop, Francis Patrick Kenrick, described the aftershocks of the Pennsylvania Hall attack for an Irish confrere in Rome:

A Negro man escaped from the lunatic asylum a few days since and murdered a watchman; and on Saturday night, one or two negroes deliberately murdered an Irishman, whom they accused of having assisted in arresting the lunatic. Last night there were serious indications of a riot to avenge this death, and we are still in dread that some dreadful act of vengeance will fall on the unhappy people of color.²³

Thus by the 1840s, slavery had become an extremely contentious issue and racial tensions had intensified. Irish Americans, for their part, generally sided against both abolitionists and free African Americans. O’Connell was deeply troubled by this shift in America. Motivated by humanitarian principles and by his religious beliefs, O’Connell had been an abolitionist since 1824 and did not want to compromise on this issue.²⁴ As a member of Parliament, he had played a key role in emancipating the slaves of the British West Indies in 1833 and he was determined that America would follow Britain’s example.²⁵ In February 1838 five Irish Americans from Philadelphia wrote to O’Connell imploring him to

Notorious Slum (New York, 2001), 7–13.

²⁰ Mayer, *All on Fire*, 200–206.

²¹ Feldberg, *Philadelphia Riots of 1844*, 34–35. This was one of the only antiabolitionist riots involving Irish Americans. See Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, 134.

²² David Grimsted, *American Mobbing, 1828–1861: Toward Civil War* (New York, 1998), 36; Nicholas B. Wainwright, “The Age of Nicholas Biddle, 1825–1841,” in *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History*, ed. Russell F. Weigley (New York, 1982), 295–96. For the concerns then expressed among scholars about the dangers of race mixing, see Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 223–27.

²³ Most Rev. F. P. Kenrick to Most Rev. Paul Cullen, June 13, 1838, Propaganda Fide Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives, Notre Dame, IN.

²⁴ See Douglas C. Riach, “O’Connell and Slavery,” in *The World of Daniel O’Connell*, ed. Donal McCartney (Dublin, 1980), 175–85.

²⁵ For O’Connell’s role in West Indian emancipation, see Itzhak Gross, “The Abolition of Negro Slavery and British Parliamentary Politics, 1832–1833,” *Historical Journal* 23 (1980): 63–85.

temper his attacks on American slavery.²⁶ O'Connell sent them back a sharp rejoinder. In August he was the keynote speaker at an English rally celebrating the end of slavery in the West Indies. During his speech he dismissed George Washington as a slaveholding hypocrite and then launched into an attack on Andrew Stevenson, a Virginia slaveholder who was then serving as ambassador to the Court of St. James. Denouncing Stevenson as a "slave breeder," O'Connell wondered why "America would send here a man who trafficks in blood."²⁷ Stevenson was so outraged that he considered challenging O'Connell to a duel. American abolitionists, meanwhile, were thrilled by O'Connell's boldness. Elizur Wright of the AAS commended O'Connell for the "rebuken you have dealt to American Slavery in the matter of Mr. Stevenson." He then assured O'Connell that he "could do great service to the slave" by sending an "address to the Irish portion of our population, giving plainly your views on *slavery*. They will listen to *you*."²⁸

Launching Repeal

After ten years of being near the center of British politics and five years into an alliance with Lord Melbourne and the Whigs, O'Connell decided to make a serious bid for Repeal.²⁹ He was under increasing pressure from Irish nationalists who did not approve of his close cooperation with Melbourne. In the summer of 1840, O'Connell established the Loyal National Repeal Association, though at first he had little time to devote to it. In June he took a leading part in the World Anti-Slavery Convention, which was being held in London. In his speeches he took aim once again at American slavery, to the delight of William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Lucretia Mott, and the other delegates.³⁰

²⁶ John Binns et al. to Daniel O'Connell, Feb. 2, 1838, *The Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell* (New York, 1972–1980), 6:2499; Ignatiev, *How the Irish became White*, 7–8.

²⁷ Quoted in Francis Fry Wayland, *Andrew Stevenson: Democrat and Diplomat, 1785–1857* (Philadelphia, 1949), 184. See also Howard Temperley, "The O'Connell-Stevenson Contretemps: A Reflection of the Anglo-American Slavery Issue," *Journal of Negro History* 47 (1962): 217–33.

²⁸ Elizur Wright to Daniel O'Connell, Oct. 20, 1838, *Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell*, 6:2566. Emphasis in original.

²⁹ He had asked the House of Commons to study the Repeal issue in 1834, but his proposal was overwhelmingly defeated. See MacDonagh, *Emancipist*, 98–105.

³⁰ Douglas Riach, "Ireland and the Campaign against American Slavery, 1830–1860" (PhD diss., Edinburgh University, 1975), 151–53; Oscar Sherwin, *Prophet of Liberty: The Life and Times of Wendell Phillips* (New York, 1958), 114–15.

Perhaps because he was one of the few Catholics at the meeting, O'Connell also made a point of hailing Pope Gregory XVI's recent letter condemning the slave trade.³¹

O'Connell still had business to attend to in Parliament as well. In August he and his Irish supporters backed the Whigs' Municipal Reform Act, which broke the Protestants' stranglehold on Irish city governments.³² With this measure enacted, O'Connell was prepared to focus on Repeal. In August he held a Repeal meeting in Tuam in western Ireland that drew ten thousand supporters, but subsequent meetings in south-western towns attracted smaller crowds.³³ Throughout the fall of 1840 and spring of 1841 Repealers held weekly meetings in Dublin. O'Connell was usually in London, however, trying to bolster the Melbourne government. In his stead, his son John often presided. A dedicated abolitionist, the younger O'Connell devoted a portion of each meeting to a denunciation of the evils of American slavery.³⁴

In America the movement initially had more dynamism. In October 1840 several tradesmen and laborers in Boston formed the first American Repeal chapter under the leadership of John James, a Yankee Protestant and Democrat who had backed Catholic Emancipation in the 1820s.³⁵ In December Joseph Doran and several other professional men organized the Philadelphia Repealers. Doran had remained active in Irish circles in the 1830s and had gained prominence in the Irish community after his election as an associate justice of the Court of General Sessions in March 1840.³⁶ A few days after the Philadelphia Repealers organized, a group of New Yorkers met at Democratic Party offices at Tammany Hall and established a Repeal organization under the leadership of Thomas Emmet's son, Robert. For the Democrats, Repeal was an attractive issue

³¹ *Dublin Weekly Herald*, June 20, 1840; *Liberator*, Aug. 14, 1840. For the controversy over the meaning of the pope's letter, see John F. Quinn, "'Three Cheers for the Abolitionist Pope': American Reaction to Gregory XVI's Condemnation of the Slave Trade, 1840–1860," *Catholic Historical Review* 90 (2004): 67–93.

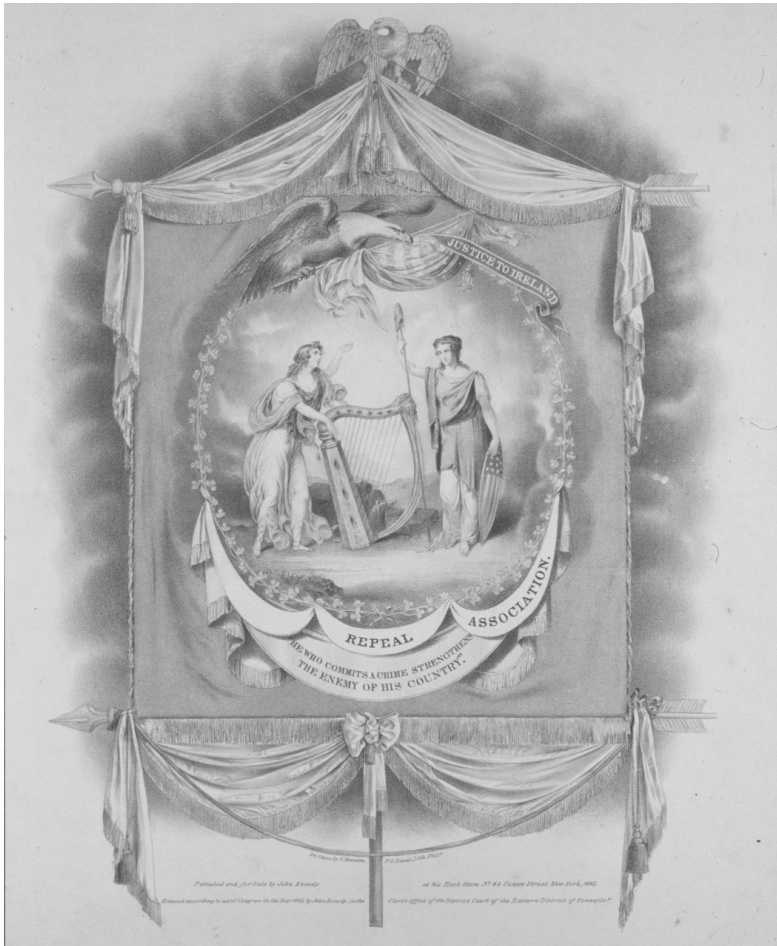
³² Angus D. MacIntyre, *The Liberator: Daniel O'Connell and the Irish Party, 1830–1847* (New York, 1965), 254–61.

³³ MacDonagh, *Emancipist*, 187–91.

³⁴ Riach, "Ireland and the Campaign against American Slavery," 154–55.

³⁵ George Potter, *To the Golden Door: The Story of the Irish in Ireland and America* (Boston, 1960), 389–90.

³⁶ J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *A History of Philadelphia, 1609–1884* (Philadelphia, 1884), 3:1545; *An Account of the Proceedings of the Celebration of St. Patrick's Day 1837 at the Hall of the Franklin Institute, Masonic Hall, and the Oration of Joseph M. Doran* (Philadelphia, 1837).



Repeal Association banner. The text reads, “He who commits a crime strengthens the enemy of his country.” Lithograph by P. V. Duval, Philadelphia. Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-67889].

because it fit in well with their generally anglophobic foreign policy and enabled them to strengthen their ties with Irish American voters.

In the spring of 1841 the first American contributions arrived at Repeal headquarters in Dublin. On St. Patrick's Day, Doran sent a check to O'Connell for two hundred pounds along with a list of the names of nine hundred Philadelphians who had contributed to the Repeal cause.³⁷

³⁷ Joseph Doran to Daniel O'Connell, Mar. 17, 1841, printed in the *Truth Teller*, May 1, 1841.

A week later, James sent in one hundred pounds from Boston.³⁸ Meanwhile, Repealers were establishing new associations in cities large and small: Baltimore; Cincinnati; Rochester, New York; and Pottsville, Pennsylvania.³⁹

The New York City chapter had difficulties right from the start because its president, Emmet, resigned in anger after hearing that O'Connell had denounced the United Irishmen for having resorted to violence.⁴⁰ Consequently, the Philadelphia Repeal Association (PRA) became the dominant organization in the country. Boasting over two thousand members, the PRA had meetings every week. In June Doran returned to an idea of his from the Catholic Emancipation campaign: he wrote to the New York chapter to suggest that a national Repeal convention be held in Philadelphia.⁴¹

On July 4, the PRA staged a grand parade through the streets of Philadelphia. Judge Doran led the procession and was followed by two thousand marchers, including a company of uniformed militiamen, the Hibernia Greens, and members of several Catholic temperance societies. The marchers held aloft a green banner with an image of Lady Liberty giving a liberty cap to Hibernia. The climax of the day was a lecture by the Reverend Dr. Patrick Moriarity. An Irish-born Augustinian friar, Moriarity was active in both the temperance and Repeal movements and was well-known for his oratorical skills.⁴²

Meanwhile, in Ireland, O'Connell spent the summer of 1841 preparing for a general election. He campaigned tirelessly for Repealers and Whigs, but the Tories won resoundingly nonetheless. In August, Sir Robert Peel, a long-standing enemy of O'Connell's, took office as prime minister.⁴³ With no hope of achieving any further reforms in Parliament, O'Connell turned his sights back homeward. As a result of the Municipal Reform Act, he was able to gain election as lord mayor of Dublin, the first

³⁸ Potter, *To the Golden Door*, 388.

³⁹ *Truth Teller*, Feb. 20 and 27, 1841; Potter, *To the Golden Door*, 392–93.

⁴⁰ O'Connell was strictly committed to nonviolent action. Potter, *To the Golden Door*, 390.

⁴¹ *Truth Teller*, May 1, May 29, and June 5, 1841.

⁴² *Truth Teller*, July 10, 1841; Joseph George Jr., "Very Rev. Dr. Patrick E. Moriarity: Philadelphia's Fenian Spokesman," *Pennsylvania History* 48 (1981): 222–23.

⁴³ When Peel served as Irish chief secretary in the 1810s, O'Connell nicknamed him "Orange Peel" because of his alleged sympathies with Irish Protestants. The two men almost fought a duel in 1815. See Charles Trevelyan Trench, *The Great Dan: A Biography of Daniel O'Connell* (London, 1986), 92–94.

Catholic to hold the position in more than a century.⁴⁴

During his one year in office, O'Connell took his responsibilities seriously and tried to administer Dublin in an efficient and nonpartisan manner. As a full-time resident of Dublin, he was able to attend most of the regular Repeal meetings. At those sessions he gave vent to his anger at Peel and the Tories, but spent much time as well celebrating the vibrancy of the Repeal movement in America. In October he reported that the Philadelphia Repealers had 3,223 members in their chapter and that the Baltimore society had enlisted 550. He noted as well that meetings had been held in Newark, New Jersey; Troy, New York; Brooklyn; Boston; and Washington, DC. At the end of October, £390 was received from several American branches.⁴⁵ O'Connell was thrilled by this financial support, especially since "the part of America from which they received the largest was unstained with any species of slavery."⁴⁶

"Cling by the Abolitionists"

In the summer of 1841 two Dublin abolitionists, James Haughton and R. D. Webb, took it upon themselves to send an address on slavery to the Irish in America. Haughton and Webb urged the Irish emigrants "to treat the colored people as your equals, as brethren. By all your memories of Ireland, continue to love liberty—hate slavery—CLING BY THE ABOLITIONISTS—and in America, you will do honor to the name of Ireland."⁴⁷ O'Connell, who had been too busy campaigning for office to draft a letter of his own, was happy to sign it. The other famous signer was Father Theobald Mathew, who was then leading a phenomenally successful temperance campaign.⁴⁸ Better yet for Haughton and Webb, O'Connell directed his nationwide network of Repeal Wardens to obtain as many signatures as possible for the address.⁴⁹ Thanks largely to their efforts, by December 1841, sixty thousand Irishmen had signed on. The letter was carried to America by Charles Lenox Remond, a free black

⁴⁴ MacDonagh, *Emancipist*, 202–4.

⁴⁵ *Belfast Vindicator*, Oct. 13, 23, and 30, 1841.

⁴⁶ Quoted in *Dublin Morning Register*, Dec. 7, 1841.

⁴⁷ *Liberator*, Mar. 25, 1842.

⁴⁸ See John F. Quinn, *Father Mathew's Crusade: Temperance in Nineteenth-Century Ireland and Irish America* (Amherst, MA, 2002), 86–97.

⁴⁹ For the Repeal Wardens' efforts, see Loyal National Repeal Association Papers, MS 13:623, National Library of Ireland, Dublin.

abolitionist who had been lecturing and fundraising in Ireland for months. When Remond arrived in Boston, he presented it to his friend and mentor, William Lloyd Garrison, who was confident that it would help break the Irish immigrants' alliance with southern slaveholders and northern Democrats. To publicize the address, Garrison held a meeting in Faneuil Hall, which drew five thousand people, fifteen hundred of whom were Irish immigrants. Before reading the address, Garrison endorsed Repeal and praised O'Connell for his struggle against English "oppression and misrule." Wendell Phillips, a Boston native who had been living in Italy, then proceeded to praise Pope Gregory XVI and other leading Catholics in Rome for their openness to people of all races.⁵⁰

Garrison was confident that he and Phillips and the other speakers—Remond and Frederick Douglass—had connected with their Irish listeners. During the following week, Phillips and two other abolitionists decided to attend a regular meeting of the Boston Repeal Association to further promote the Irish Address. When they tried to link Repeal to the anti-slavery movement, however, they received no encouragement whatsoever from the rank and file Repealers.⁵¹

For American Repealers, the timing of the Irish Address could not have been worse. Leaders of Repeal chapters had accepted Doran's proposal and were about to convene on Washington's Birthday at Independence Hall in Philadelphia. When the two hundred delegates representing twenty-seven societies arrived, they were welcomed not by Doran but by William Stokes, who had succeeded him as president of the PRA in January.⁵² Stokes chaired the meeting until John James was elected to preside. While the organizers had hoped to establish a national Repeal association and develop closer ties among the chapters, most of the delegates were preoccupied with the Irish Address and so the bulk of the two-day meeting was devoted to it. Isaac Wright, a Democratic activist from Boston, alluded to Garrison's recent efforts before offering a resolution declaring that the American Repealers would not concern themselves "with the domestic institutions of any section of the Republic."⁵³ James Hoban of Washington, DC, was more blunt: "I desire . . . that O'Connell and all connected may hear, and know, that if they will press abolition,

⁵⁰ *Liberator*, Feb. 4, 1842.

⁵¹ Riach, "Ireland and the Campaign against American Slavery," 165–66; *Boston Pilot*, Feb. 5, 1842.

⁵² *Truth Teller*, Jan. 22, 1842.

⁵³ Quoted in *Report of the Proceedings of the National Repeal Convention of the Friends of Ireland* (Philadelphia, 1842), 9; Potter, *To the Golden Door*, 397–98.

[they] will alienate the affections of many of Ireland's friends in America."⁵⁴ These comments provoked angry responses from several delegates who saw them as attacks on O'Connell. After further debate on the second day, Stokes proposed a resolution similar to Wright's but couched it in more diplomatic language. This resolution was approved unanimously shortly before the conclusion of the convention.

In the weeks after the convention, the controversy around the Irish Address intensified. In early March, John Hughes, who had become bishop of New York in 1839, questioned the authenticity of the address.⁵⁵ Hughes declared that if it were proved to be genuine, it would be "the duty of every naturalized Irishman to resist and repudiate the address with indignation. Not precisely because of the doctrines it contains, but because of its having emanated from a foreign source. . . . I am no friend to slavery, but I am still less friendly to any attempt of foreign origin to abolish it."⁵⁶ Hughes's views on slavery had clearly shifted considerably in the years since Catholic Emancipation was achieved.⁵⁷

Hughes had also become much more concerned about being seen as an American. For two years, he had been lobbying unsuccessfully for state funds for the Catholic schoolchildren of New York City. Hughes's proposal had infuriated nativists like Samuel Morse who argued that public schools simply instructed children in the Bible and basic Christian morality and did not enter into denominational disputes. Morse and his associates were angry that a foreign-born Catholic prelate would criticize New York's public schools. Having been vilified as an agent of the pope, Hughes did not want to be seen as an agent of O'Connell as well.⁵⁸

Many Irish Americans shared Hughes's concerns about the Irish Address. Several Irish American newspapers and Repeal associations followed Hughes's lead and declared the address a forgery. The editors of

⁵⁴ Quoted in *Report of the Proceedings of the National Repeal Convention of the Friends of Ireland*, 10.

⁵⁵ Hughes was named administrator of the diocese in 1839 but the ailing John Dubois remained the bishop until his death in 1842.

⁵⁶ Quoted in *Liberator*, Mar. 25, 1842; *Truth Teller*, Mar. 12, 1842. Since the early 1830s, antiabolitionists had often depicted the antislavery movement as a foreign plot to undermine the United States. See Leonard L. Richards, *Gentlemen of Property and Standing: Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York, 1970), 62–71.

⁵⁷ It may be the case that Hughes's views shifted in part because his sister Margaret married William Rodrigue in the 1830s. The Rodrigues were wealthy planters in Saint-Domingue who fled to the United States after a bloody slave uprising on the island. See Shaw, *Dagger John*, 109–10.

⁵⁸ Shaw, *Dagger John*, 139–75.

the *Boston Pilot* took a different approach. They did not dispute the authenticity of the document, but rather took aim at the abolitionists who, they claimed, were trying to provoke slave uprisings and split up the Union. In May, the Albany Repeal Association and the Louisiana Repeal Association wrote to O'Connell to warn him that the abolitionists sought to provoke a civil war.⁵⁹

Some Irish American newspapers also highlighted the heterodox theological views of Garrison and other prominent abolitionists. They made much of Garrison's opposition to any type of clergy and his unwillingness to treat Sunday as the sabbath. These editors could not understand why a staunch Catholic like O'Connell would want to associate himself in any way with the infidels and atheists in the American abolition movement.⁶⁰

O'Connell, no doubt stunned by the intensity of the Irish American reaction to the address, toned down his criticisms of American slavery in the spring and summer of 1842. At a Repeal meeting in May, he distanced himself from Garrison's religious beliefs and stressed that Irish Americans need not associate themselves with any particular group of abolitionists in order to fight slavery.⁶¹ Garrison and his supporters, in turn, were deeply disappointed by these remarks. Wendell Phillips wrote to R. D. Webb expressing his fear that O'Connell's lips had been "clogged with gold" from Repeal associations in New Orleans and other southern cities.⁶²

In July William Stokes weighed in on the subject with the same sort of finesse that he had employed at the National Repeal Convention. Along with a contribution of one hundred pounds from the PRA, he sent a letter praising O'Connell: "I respect the firmness, consistency, and humanity of Mr. O'Connell in regard to slavery all the world over, and would not . . . endeavour to change his views . . . All I desire is, that we shall not unnecessarily mingle the two questions together to the injury of both."⁶³ Stokes's letter was read in its entirety at a meeting of the Loyal National Repeal Association in Dublin and was "received with the loudest demonstrations of approbation." For the moment at least, it appeared that

⁵⁹ Riach, "Ireland and the Campaign against American Slavery," 166; Riach, "Daniel O'Connell and American Anti-Slavery," *Irish Historical Studies* 20 (1976): 12; *Boston Pilot*, June 25, 1842; David T. Gleeson, *The Irish in the South, 1815–1871* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2001), 129–30.

⁶⁰ Osofsky, "Abolitionists," 901. For Garrison's radical religious views, see Mayer, *All on Fire*, 300–304.

⁶¹ Riach, "Daniel O'Connell and American Anti-Slavery," 12.

⁶² Quoted in *ibid.*, 15. See also Ignatiev, *How the Irish became White*, 21.

⁶³ Quoted in *Truth Teller*, Aug. 27, 1842.

O'Connell was willing to take Stokes's advice and forgo discussing American slavery.

*The "City of Brotherly Hate"*⁶⁴

In August 1842, just four years after the attack on Pennsylvania Hall, Philadelphia was again the site of a brutal, racially motivated attack. The city that had once been home to the federal government and that for many years had been known as the "Athens of America," had by this time lost much of its genteel aura.⁶⁵ No longer a bustling seaport, Philadelphia had become an industrial center, filled with textile mills, iron works, and shipbuilding plants.⁶⁶ With its population reaching two hundred thousand due to an influx of Irish and German immigrants, runaway slaves, and rural Pennsylvanians looking for work, Philadelphia was struggling with both a severe housing shortage and high unemployment. Under these circumstances, little provocation was needed for violence to occur. On the morning of August 1, a group of black teetotalers held a parade to celebrate the anniversary of West Indian emancipation and promote temperance. Shortly after setting off, they were attacked by a mob of about one thousand white men and boys who supposedly thought that the rally was a celebration of the Haitian slave uprisings that had left many white people dead.⁶⁷ The attackers broke up the procession and chased the marchers back into their own neighborhoods.

As the city was without a police force at this time, the African Americans had no protection against the fury of the white mob. By nightfall the mayor, John Scott, with the aid of Judges Doran and Barton and two other attorneys, had been able to restore order.⁶⁸ By that point, how-

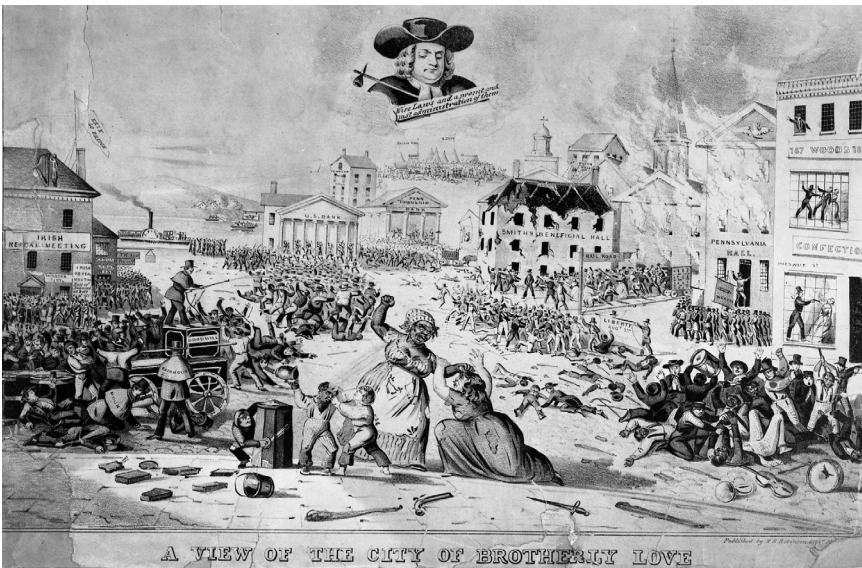
⁶⁴ Osofsky claims that by the 1840s, Philadelphia was popularly known as the "City of Brotherly Hate" and the "Murderous City." Osofsky, "Abolitionists," 900.

⁶⁵ Edgar P. Richardson, "The Athens of America, 1800–1825," in *Philadelphia*, ed. Weigley, 241–54; Feldberg, *Philadelphia Riots of 1844*, 13–16.

⁶⁶ Gary B. Nash, *First City: Philadelphia and the Forging of Historical Memory* (Philadelphia, 2002), 152–57.

⁶⁷ In 1804 the slaves on Saint-Domingue broke away from the French and slaughtered many of the white planters on the island. It is possible that the mob thought that the temperance group's banners depicting a black man breaking free of his chains were referring to the Haitian rising. David Roediger utterly rejects this claim, however. He contends that the rioters disrupted the parade because they felt threatened by African Americans acting in such a respectable, middle-class manner. Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, 154.

⁶⁸ George W. Barton served on the Court of General Sessions with Doran from 1840 till the end of 1842. I am indebted to David Baugh of the Philadelphia City Archives for this reference.



A View of the City of Brotherly Love. Lithograph by Henry R. Robinson, c. 1842, depicting the assault on a black parade commemorating West Indian emancipation and promoting temperance. The image also depicts the burning of Pennsylvania Hall, which had occurred four years earlier. Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

ever, considerable damage had already been done. While no one was killed, twelve people had to be hospitalized, a black Presbyterian church was torched, and several houses were damaged. Fearing for their lives, hundreds of African Americans fled the city for New Jersey. The violence continued the next day in an Irish neighborhood on the southwestern edge of the city. There, gangs armed with shillelaghs and clubs pursued any black people who came into the area. Again, Mayor Scott, aided this time by a sheriff's posse, had to patrol the streets in order to keep the peace.⁶⁹

In the wake of the riots, controversy arose over who bore responsibility for them. The *Public Ledger*, which was the city's leading newspaper, did not blame any particular group. The editors listed the names of the twenty boys and men who were arrested, along with those who were wounded. Several had Irish surnames, such as Keeley, Kelly, McCauley, and

⁶⁹ *Public Ledger*, Aug. 2 and 3, 1842; Sam Bass Warner Jr., *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Its Growth* (Philadelphia, 1967), 140–41; Feldberg, *Philadelphia Riots of 1844*, 6–12; Geffen, "Violence in Philadelphia," 387.

Monahan, but at least as many had English, Scottish, or German names. There were two Stewarts, two Johnsons, a Smith, a Montgomery, a Wright, a Keyser, and a Schull.⁷⁰ Clearly the second day's rioters were overwhelmingly Irish. When the sheriff sent his men into the Schuylkill neighborhood, he made each man wear a green ribbon on his lapel.

Joseph Sill, a wealthy Unitarian merchant, had no doubts about who caused the riots. After describing the course of the first day's riots in some detail, he noted in his diary: "All this the work of low Irishmen, who are more degraded than the blacks themselves."⁷¹ Garrison was of the same view: "It appears that the assaults on the persons, property and lives of the colored population were nearly all committed by the Irish residents."⁷² The editors of the *Boston Pilot* strenuously objected to this charge. While admitting that some Irishmen were involved, they noted that the serious violence of August 1 did not occur in an Irish neighborhood. The Irish were responsible only for the second day's violence, which involved "one or two cases of assault and battery, *without house or church burning*." To blame the whole affair on the Irish would be a "gross and villainous slander."⁷³

When news of the riots reached O'Connell in October, he condemned them angrily at a Repeal meeting:

Philadelphia has disgraced itself to the blackest extent . . . [W]hen the people of colour met to celebrate the glorious 1st of August, 1838 . . . [they] were assailed by truculent and ruffian violence and he blushed to say that Irishmen took a prominent part. . . . [W]here were the Catholic priests? Why did they not raise their voice against this iniquitous proceeding?

O'Connell concluded his speech by noting that he had been "accused of relaxing his efforts" against slavery. He promised his listeners that "whilst he had life, his best energies would be directed to blot out the foul stain from the earth."⁷⁴

When Stokes and his associates at the PRA learned of O'Connell's statements, they moved swiftly to offer him their version of the events. The Repealers informed O'Connell that not "one in a hundred" of the

⁷⁰ *Public Ledger*, Aug. 2, 1842.

⁷¹ Joseph Sill Diary, Aug. 1, 1842, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁷² *Liberator*, Sept. 2, 1842, quoted in Osofsky, "Abolitionists," 900.

⁷³ Quoted in *Boston Pilot*, Aug. 13, 1842. Emphasis in original.

⁷⁴ Quoted in *Nation*, Oct. 22, 1842.

rioters were Irish. They further assured him that five hundred Irishmen volunteered during the outbreaks to help the mayor keep the peace.⁷⁵

And Tyler, Too

With his term as lord mayor ending in November, O'Connell was at last ready to devote himself fully to the achievement of Repeal. American Repealers, sensing O'Connell's seriousness, redoubled their efforts to support the cause. In several cities elaborate New Year's Eve balls were held to ring in what O'Connell promised would be the "Repeal Year." In Philadelphia, the Repeal Ball raised five hundred dollars, in Brooklyn the Emerald Ball raised four hundred dollars, and in Manhattan the Erina Ball was similarly successful.⁷⁶

As the chapters became more active, prominent political figures began to take notice. In February 1843, Robert Tyler, the president's son, attended a Repeal meeting in Washington, DC, and delivered an impromptu speech. In his remarks he offered a scathing assessment of English rule over Ireland: "Beginning in fraud, conducted in tyranny and ending in . . . universal misery." He concluded by reminding his listeners of the heroism of the 1798 rebels: "Shall the example of an Emmet and Fitzgerald perish and be forgotten?⁷⁷ Shall the blood of slaughtered patriots sink into the unfeeling soil, unwept and unavenged? Never!" The crowd responded with the "greatest cheering" and news of the speech spread rapidly.⁷⁸

At this time Robert Tyler and his wife, Priscilla, were living at the White House with his father. Robert served as his father's personal secretary and Priscilla acted as a surrogate first lady after the death of Tyler's wife, Letitia, in 1842.⁷⁹ As he was in such close contact with his father, Robert presumably had some influence on his views. By June the president, a disaffected Whig who was gravitating toward the Democrats,

⁷⁵ Benjamin Binns to T. M. Ray, Nov. 17, 1842, printed in *Nation*, Jan. 14, 1843.

⁷⁶ *Truth Teller*, Jan. 28 and Feb. 18, 1843; *Boston Pilot*, Dec. 10, 1842.

⁷⁷ Robert Emmet (1778–1803) and Lord Edward Fitzgerald (1763–1798) were leading figures in the United Irishmen. Emmet, who was the uncle of the first president of the New York Repeal Association, was executed by the British for leading a small uprising in 1803. Fitzgerald was wounded in 1798 during a skirmish with the British and died shortly thereafter in prison.

⁷⁸ Quoted in *Truth Teller*, Feb. 18, 1843.

⁷⁹ Robert Seager II, *And Tyler too: A Biography of John and Julia Gardiner Tyler* (New York, 1963), 172–76; John Arthur Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, eds., *American National Biography* (New York, 1999), 22:82.

would declare himself the “decided friend” of Repeal, noting that on this “great question” he was “no half-way man.”⁸⁰

The Washington Repealers were so impressed with Robert Tyler that they invited him back to be the featured speaker at their St. Patrick’s Day gala. In other cities, too, such as St. Louis, Newark, Brooklyn, and Jersey City, Repealers organized parades and rallies in honor of St. Patrick. In Philadelphia, Stokes was proud to report that one hundred pounds had been raised at their celebration.⁸¹ All of this activity put Thomas Mooney in an exultant mood. An Irishman traveling across the country promoting Repeal, Mooney gushed: “There is no language I can use, [that] would convey an adequate idea of the feeling that is going up in this country in behalf of Ireland . . . [T]here are meetings gathering in every direction on her behalf.”⁸²

In March, O’Connell held his first “monster meeting,” a massive outdoor rally in Trim in County Meath. While planning more rallies to increase the pressure on Peel, he remained keenly interested in events in America. Taking note of Robert Tyler’s orations, O’Connell asked the Loyal National Repeal Association to send him a note of thanks. James Haughton, who was an active Repealer as well as a committed abolitionist, opposed O’Connell’s motion on the grounds that Tyler was a slaveholder. After some debate, a letter was sent to Tyler that thanked him for his support but also cautioned him the Repealers would seek their goals through “peaceable, unarmed, constitutional” means.⁸³ Clearly, Tyler’s embrace of the 1798 rebels had troubled O’Connell.

In April, O’Connell continued with his peaceable but menacing campaign. In the middle of the month he appeared before 120,000 supporters in Limerick and a few days later, 150,000 Repealers cheered him on at Kells.⁸⁴ As the rallies got larger, top officials in Dublin warned Peel that Ireland was descending into anarchy. In May, Peel appeared before the House of Commons and solemnly declared that he would not hesitate to

⁸⁰ Quoted in *Nation*, July 22, 1843. See also *Catholic Herald*, June 15, 1843. The Whigs, angry over Tyler’s economic policies, had formally excommunicated him in September 1841 and had tried to impeach him. See Michael Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York, 1999), 149–50.

⁸¹ *Truth Teller*, Feb. 15, Mar. 4, Apr. 1, and May 20, 1843.

⁸² Thomas Mooney to the Editor, *Nation*, Mar. 11, 1843. Mooney was controversial in American Repeal circles and never enjoyed O’Connell’s full support. See Potter, *To the Golden Door*, 390–92.

⁸³ Daniel O’Connell to Robert Tyler, Apr. 1, 1843, printed in *Truth Teller*, May 6, 1843. See also *Nation*, Apr. 8, 1843.

⁸⁴ McCaffrey, *Daniel O’Connell and the Repeal Year*, 52.

use military force to prevent the dismemberment of the British Empire. This threat only served to energize the Repealers still more.

Just as the Repeal movement was gathering momentum, it again had to deal with American slavery. In May, the Loyal National Repeal Association received a detailed letter from the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society that set out to refute all the claims put forth in the previous months by the *Boston Pilot* and various American Repeal societies. O'Connell was very enthusiastic and called for a special meeting of the association to consider the letter. With Haughton in the chair, O'Connell delivered a long and emotional speech. He first thanked the abolitionists for describing "the horrors of slavery in their genuine colours." He then called on his countrymen to "come out of such a land . . . or if you remain and dare countenance the system of slavery that is supported there, we will recognise you as Irishmen no longer. . . . America, the black spot of slavery rests upon your star-spangled banner . . . and a just Providence will sooner or later, avenge itself for your crime." He concluded by remarking that "we may not get money from America after this declaration, but even if we should not, we do not want blood-stained money."⁸⁵

O'Connell's prediction proved to be right. His declaration did have a dramatic impact on American Repealers. The language he had used was so pointed and accusatory that it simply could not be ignored. Given the state of communication at that time, however, more than a month would pass before the Americans would see accounts of O'Connell's speech. In the meantime, American Repealers continued to promote the cause energetically.

All across the country, the movement seemed to be catching fire. Sizable rallies were held in Buffalo, New Orleans, Baltimore, and Mobile. In St. Louis, Colonel Richard Johnson, who had served as Martin Van Buren's vice president, appeared at a Repeal rally along with a Missouri congressman. Johnson, a blustering Kentucky slaveholder and former Indian fighter, was then seeking the Democratic presidential nomination.⁸⁶ In Boston, Repealers heard the former Transcendentalist philosopher Orestes Brownson and Robert Tyler on successive weeks. The editor of the Irish American *Truth Teller* reported that the "excitement is very

⁸⁵ *Nation*, May 13, 1843.

⁸⁶ *Truth Teller*, June 3 and 10, 1843. See Leland Winfield Meyer, *The Life and Times of Colonel Richard M. Johnson of Kentucky* (New York, 1931), 452–59; Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. and Fred Israel, eds. *History of American Presidential Elections, 1789–1968* (New York, 1971), 1:752, 766–67.

great" in Philadelphia because the state's Democratic governor, David Porter, had presided over a PRA meeting. The governors of Ohio and Illinois, Wilson Shannon and Thomas Carlin, fellow Democrats, had also endorsed Repeal.⁸⁷ No city could match New York's enthusiasm, however. In June, Repealers held a series of seven "monster meetings" at Washington Hall and in City Hall Park. Crowds ranged from twenty to thirty thousand for each night.⁸⁸ By the end of June this flurry of activity had raised almost eleven hundred pounds for the Loyal National Repeal Association in Dublin.⁸⁹

Philadelphia Feud

By the end of June news of O'Connell's fierce antislavery speech had reached America. In Charleston, the Repeal association declared the speech a "base and malignant libel upon the people of the South" and then voted to dissolve.⁹⁰ In Natchez, Mississippi, the Repealers also decided to disband.⁹¹ When the Savannah Repealers met, they rebuked O'Connell for "taking his lessons on Southern institutions from Northern abolitionists," but they nevertheless vowed to continue working for Repeal.⁹²

When the PRA met, Stokes established a committee to examine O'Connell's speech and prepare a response. He and four other members drew up a series of resolutions that acknowledged the PRA's "profound respect" for O'Connell but also declared that their organization had "no opinions or feelings in common with the sentiments expressed" in O'Connell's recent speech. The resolutions provoked a long and acrimonious debate as several members saw them as unduly critical of O'Connell. Consequently, the PRA approved a substitute statement that simply noted that the PRA concerned itself only with Repeal. Stokes left

⁸⁷ *Truth Teller*, June 17, June 24, and Aug. 5, 1843; *Catholic Herald*, June 15, 1843.

⁸⁸ *Truth Teller*, June 10 and 17, 1843; Potter, *To the Golden Door*, 400.

⁸⁹ Potter, *To the Golden Door*, 401; *Nation*, July 8, 1843; *Truth Teller*, Aug. 5, 1843.

⁹⁰ *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*, July 8, 1843; *Liberator*, July 14, 1843.

⁹¹ Riach, "Daniel O'Connell and American Anti-Slavery," 17. Charles Dickens lampooned the southern Repealers in his 1844 novel, *Martin Chuzzlewit*. In his rendering, the groups learn of their leader's antislavery views and then dissolve and donate their funds "to a certain constitutional Judge, who had laid down . . . the noble principle that it was lawful for any white mob to murder any black man." *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit* (London, 1988), 350.

⁹² *Truth Teller*, Aug. 19, 1843; Gleeson, *Irish in the South*, 131.

the meeting angry that his resolutions had been rejected.⁹³

A couple of days later, the PRA held another meeting to determine how to proceed. Appearing on behalf of the absent Stokes, Dr. Patrick Moriarity, the pastor of St. Augustine's Church, read a letter from him explaining his decision to resign as president of the PRA. As the PRA had provided "virtual sanction" to O'Connell's abolitionism, he could not in good conscience retain his office. Moriarity then spoke at length in defense of Stokes and his resolutions. By the time the meeting finally ended, Moriarity's oratory had swayed the majority. The Repealers approved a proposal asking Stokes to return to office and agreed to reconsider Stokes's motions.⁹⁴

Less than a week later, the PRA held another meeting. With Stokes serving again as president, the Repealers welcomed Robert Tyler to the podium. Tyler, noting that he had received a complimentary note from O'Connell just two months earlier, doubted whether O'Connell had in fact delivered the speech in May. Rather, this speech was a "firebrand thrown amongst us" by British abolitionists to spread dissension in the Repeal movement. These zealots have "no feelings . . . for any body but the cannibal negro on the shores of Africa." Tyler concluded with a promise that no one would succeed in driving him away from Repeal. The audience responded with great enthusiasm, offering three cheers for Robert Tyler and three cheers for his father, the president.⁹⁵

A Philadelphia abolitionist who closely observed these events noted that not all Repealers supported Stokes, Moriarity, and Tyler: "A respectable, and perhaps a large minority" resigned from the PRA over the controversy.⁹⁶ These dissidents came together later in the month to establish a rival Repeal organization: the Association of the Friends of Ireland and Repeal (AFIR). Judge Doran, who had not been active in the Repeal cause since January 1842, agreed to serve as the group's president.⁹⁷ At its first meeting, the AFIR drew up a resolution that offered O'Connell its full support. Along with the resolution and a contribution

⁹³ *Public Ledger*, June 28, 1843.

⁹⁴ *Public Ledger*, June 30, 1843; *Liberator*, July 14, 1843.

⁹⁵ *Truth Teller*, July 15, 1843.

⁹⁶ J. Miller McKim to Editor, July 6, 1843, printed in *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, July 13, 1843.

⁹⁷ Doran's term on the Court of General Sessions came to an end in February 1843. See Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 3:1545. He is described as an "ex-judge" in the *Nation*, Sept. 2, 1843.

of fifty pounds, Doran enclosed a letter assuring him of the new organization's "unshaken confidence." Doran closed with an implicit endorsement of O'Connell's antislavery crusade: "Recognizing you as the deliverer from bondage of my father's land and the fearless and consistent champion of the rights of man throughout the world."⁹⁸

While O'Connell was staging ever larger and more triumphal rallies, he continued to follow closely the activities of American Repealers. In late August, shortly after having presided over a massive rally at the Hill of Tara, the ancient and medieval seat of Ireland's high kings, O'Connell took note of Doran's letter. After dismissing Stokes as a "man more in love with slavery than with Ireland," he asked that a letter be sent to Doran for "this highly prized token of sympathy and affectionate regard."⁹⁹

At the following week's Repeal meeting, O'Connell was disheartened to receive a letter from the Cincinnati Repealers that offered a very different response to his May speech. Along with a donation of £113, the Repealers sent a detailed reply. Acknowledging slavery to be "an evil of the highest magnitude," they then proceeded to list all the obstacles that made emancipation of the slaves next to impossible. They put much of the blame on the abolitionists who were encouraging slaves to flee from their masters. They concluded by warning O'Connell that to seek an alliance between the Irish and the Catholic-hating abolitionists was "to expect an impossibility."¹⁰⁰ O'Connell, outraged by the "trash" put forward by the Cincinnati Repealers, proposed that the Loyal National Repeal Association send them a thorough answer.¹⁰¹ Before he could get around to that, however, he had to prepare for another round of "monster meetings."

As O'Connell's campaign intensified in Ireland, Doran set out to increase support for O'Connell among American Repealers. Having established the AFIR in July, Doran's first challenge was the National Repeal Convention, which was scheduled to occur in September at the Broadway Tabernacle in New York City. Doran and his associates assembled a slate of thirty-five representatives, which made it one of the largest delegations at the convention. Stokes and the PRA, however, brought a contingent of sixty-five. Together the delegates from the two Philadelphia

⁹⁸ Joseph Doran to Daniel O'Connell, July 29, 1843, Doran Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁹⁹ Quoted in *Nation*, Aug. 26, 1843.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in *Freeman's Journal*, Aug. 31, 1843.

¹⁰¹ Quoted in *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Sept. 28, 1843.

associations comprised 25 percent of the convention's representatives.

From the start of the meeting, it was apparent that Doran had little support outside of the AFIR. Robert Tyler was elected president of the body and then the thirteen states represented were each directed to select a vice president for the meeting. For some reason Pennsylvanians were allowed to nominate two vice presidents, and so they opted for both Stokes and Moriarity. Stokes took a leading role over the course of the three days. On one occasion he remarked that he spoke for six thousand Philadelphia Repealers. At this point, someone in the audience—presumably Doran or one of his allies—dissented vehemently, whereupon “some confusion occurred.”¹⁰² Eventually Moriarity got the floor and defended Stokes, and Stokes was able to continue with his speech.

Aside from occasional sparring among the Philadelphians, this convention went much more smoothly than the first one. All the delegates scrupulously avoided discussing slavery or any other controversial topic.¹⁰³ The only substantive matter considered was whether to establish a permanent executive committee to coordinate American Repeal efforts. After some debate, a five-man directory was agreed upon, which included John James of Boston, John McKeon, a former Democratic congressman from New York City, and John Binns, a member of the PRA and close ally of Stokes.¹⁰⁴

Showdown at Clontarf

Despite having lost out to the PRA at the convention, Doran and his associates were determined to remain active and keep O'Connell apprised about their doings. At an October meeting, O'Connell read a letter from William Henry Dunne of the AFIR. Dunne explained that his association had been willing to accept a contribution from Robert Purvis, who was the most prominent black abolitionist in Philadelphia. Purvis had met O'Connell in London and was a long-time supporter of Repeal.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Quoted in *Truth Teller*, Sept. 23, 1843.

¹⁰³ For a dismissive account of the proceedings, see *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Sept. 28, 1843.

¹⁰⁴ McKeon, a close friend of Bishop Hughes, had been elected to Congress in 1840 but had not been re-elected in 1842. See *Biographical Dictionary of the American Congress, 1774–1971* (Washington, DC, 1971), 1382–83.

¹⁰⁵ Purvis was a founding member of the American Anti-Slavery Society and had led the efforts in 1838 to retain black voting rights in Pennsylvania. See Julie Winch, *Philadelphia's Black Elite: Activism, Accommodation, and the Struggle for Autonomy, 1787–1848* (Philadelphia, 1988).

Dunne noted that the AFIR's decision had been unpopular: "Here is our fault and for it the American people are put on their guard against our Association." O'Connell was indignant: "Was it possible . . . that it should be raised as an accusation against any man in a Repeal association, that he was black, and that being black, he could not be allowed to subscribe?"¹⁰⁶ O'Connell directed that appreciative letters be sent both to Dunne and to Purvis. Doran followed up Dunne's letter with a note to O'Connell's daughter, Ellen Fitzsimon. Writing on behalf of the female members of the AFIR, Doran enclosed fifty pounds and asked her to make known to her father "how large a space the cause of Ireland fills in the affections of the women of America."¹⁰⁷

On October 8, O'Connell was scheduled to stage the grandest Repeal rally of the year on the outskirts of Dublin. Set to occur at Clontarf, site of an Irish victory over the Vikings in the Middle Ages, the Peel administration banned the rally on the preceding day on the grounds that it was a military gathering. After consulting with his top aides, O'Connell, ever the constitutionalist, acquiesced.¹⁰⁸

At the Repeal meetings the following week, O'Connell spent much time castigating Peel, but he also held a special meeting to respond to the Cincinnati Repealers. He began the session by declaring his "utter amazement at the perversion of mind and depravity of heart which your letter evinces." To the charge that slaves were in a "state of degradation," O'Connell responded that their condition would improve if they were given appropriate educational opportunities. For those Repealers who thought that abolitionism was too radical, he proposed a series of measures that they could pursue on their own. They could lobby to give the franchise to free African Americans; they could work to halt the internal slave trade among the southern states; and they could press for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. Finally, for those who had any doubt about the Catholic Church's view on the matter, he reminded them that Pope Gregory XVI "condemned all dealing and traffic in slaves" and sent them a copy of the pope's letter.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Oct. 26, 1843.

¹⁰⁷ Joseph Doran to Mrs. Christopher Fitzsimon, Sept. 29, 1843, printed in *Truth Teller*, Nov. 25, 1843.

¹⁰⁸ The administration saw a notice that a "Repeal Cavalry" would accompany O'Connell. While the force was unarmed and purely ceremonial, its presence provided the pretext for banning the meeting. See McCaffrey, *Daniel O'Connell and the Repeal Year*, 195–99.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in *Nation*, Oct. 14, 1843.

How the Repealers in Cincinnati and elsewhere in America would have responded to this letter will never be known because just three days after O'Connell delivered these remarks he was arrested for sedition on Peel's orders. This decision to arrest a man who had scrupulously obeyed all laws sparked outrage throughout Ireland and Irish America. Consequently, no Repealers were about to challenge O'Connell on any subject. Indeed, when the Cincinnati Repealers met to consider O'Connell's letter, a reporter noted that it "was listened to with profound attention and respect." At the end of their meeting they passed a series of resolutions that were "exceedingly complimentary" to O'Connell.¹¹⁰ The editors of the *Boston Pilot* were similarly conciliatory: they endorsed much of O'Connell's critique of slavery but felt that he was still too sanguine about the abolitionists.¹¹¹

Throughout much of the country the Repeal movement gained new momentum. At the beginning of December, Colonel Johnson and Robert Tyler both spoke at a large rally in Washington. Tyler delivered a fiery speech asking his listeners whether the time to press for a peaceful repeal of the union had passed.¹¹² In New York, a monster meeting was planned for Tammany Hall and another Erina Ball was set for New Year's Eve. In Philadelphia, both Repeal groups continued to meet regularly—often on the same night! Southern Repealers, too, were active on behalf of the cause. In Charleston, Repealers reorganized themselves, and in cities in Georgia and Virginia they established new chapters.¹¹³ In January 1844, the editor of the *Truth Teller* exulted that Repeal was "now an unbroken front from Maine to Louisiana."¹¹⁴

In February 1844 Stokes tendered his resignation as president of the PRA. Having led the organization through two tumultuous years, he stepped down so that he could devote himself more fully to Democratic Party activities.¹¹⁵ Choosing a successor to Stokes was not a problem at all because Robert Tyler was moving his family to Philadelphia at this time. President Tyler had announced his engagement to Julia Gardiner and would marry her in June. With the wedding approaching, Robert

¹¹⁰ Quoted in *Liberator*, Dec. 22, 1843.

¹¹¹ Riach, "Ireland and the Campaign against American Slavery," 212.

¹¹² *Truth Teller*, Jan. 6, 1844.

¹¹³ Riach, "Ireland and the Campaign against American Slavery," 216.

¹¹⁴ Quoted in *Truth Teller*, Jan. 20, 1844.

¹¹⁵ *Truth Teller*, Feb. 18 and Apr. 16, 1844; William A. Stokes, *Justice to Jackson: An Oration Delivered on the 1st of April 1844* . . . (Philadelphia, 1844).

decided to vacate the White House and move to Philadelphia to be closer to his wife's relatives. In March, Tyler took over as president of the PRA.¹¹⁶

At the same time, President Tyler, who was then angling for the Democratic nomination, sent a pro-Repeal letter on St. Patrick's Day to an Irish group in Washington.¹¹⁷ In Charleston, Repealers staged a grand St. Patrick's Day rally and prepared to welcome Dr. Moriarity, who was heading south from Philadelphia on a Repeal tour.¹¹⁸ From New York City Repealers sent off a six hundred-pound contribution in April.

In Ireland, by contrast, the movement was flagging by the beginning of 1844. O'Connell had solemnly promised the Irish people that 1843 would be the Repeal Year. When the year ended without a parliament in Dublin some of his followers began to doubt him. O'Connell had also shaken the confidence of many of his supporters by remarking that he would be willing to accept a "federalist" compromise, which would offer Ireland limited autonomy. These factors contributed to a marked decline in Repeal contributions. By January, Repeal contributions—which had topped two thousand pounds a week in the summer—fell below three hundred pounds.¹¹⁹

In January, O'Connell and his son John and six other Repealers stood trial for seditious conspiracy. In his defense, O'Connell pointed out that his campaign had been entirely peaceful. No one had been injured at any of his rallies nor had there been any property damaged. Still, the all-Protestant jury was not persuaded. Each member of the group was convicted and given a one-year jail sentence.

"The Most Awful and Bloody Riot"

In May Philadelphia's Irish Catholics suddenly found themselves facing a much more pressing issue than Repeal. Nativists, with strong backing from the city's Scotch-Irish and English Protestants, had organized the American Republican Party in 1843. Party members sought to make it

¹¹⁶ Seager, *And Tyler too*, 233.

¹¹⁷ John Tyler to Irish Citizens, Mar. 15, 1844, John Tyler Papers, reel 1, Library of Congress. For Tyler's interest in the Democratic nomination, see Schlesinger and Israel, eds., *History of American Presidential Elections*, 1:782–84.

¹¹⁸ Moriarity spoke at Repeal meetings in Savannah and Charleston. See *Truth Teller*, May 25, 1844; *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*, Apr. 20, 1844.

¹¹⁹ McCaffrey, *Daniel O'Connell and the Repeal Year*, 206–7; MacDonagh, *Emancipist*, 233.



Native American Republican Association of Philadelphia membership certificate, c. 1845. The motto “Beware of Foreign Influence” appears on a streamer above a bust portrait of George Washington. Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-90660].

harder for immigrants to become citizens and ardently backed Bible reading and other prayer services in the public schools. In 1842, Bishop Kenrick had asked the city’s school board to allow Catholic children to read from the Douai-Rheims Bible in lieu of the King James Version favored by Protestants.¹²⁰ Rather than request funding for Catholic schools as Bishop Hughes had done, Kenrick sought to change the public schools’ curriculum so that Catholic children could participate more comfortably. The board turned down Kenrick’s request, but declared that Catholic students could be excused from all religious exercises.¹²¹

In Kensington, a heavily Irish Catholic and Scotch-Irish suburb, this compromise proved unworkable. So many children were leaving the class-

¹²⁰ The text of Kenrick’s letter is printed in Hugh J. Nolan, *The Most Reverend Francis Patrick Kenrick, Third Bishop of Philadelphia, 1830–1851* (Philadelphia, 1948), 293–95.

¹²¹ Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York, 1992), 11; David Montgomery, “The Shuttle and the Cross: Weavers and Artisans in the Kensington Riots of 1844,” *Journal of Social History* 5 (1972): 425.

room during the prayer exercises that the teacher felt that she was unable to maintain order. Consequently, in February 1844, Hugh Clark, the school district's Irish Catholic director, ordered the teacher to suspend all religious services until further notice.¹²²

This was all the nativists needed to hear. Irish Catholics were trying to ban the Bible from the city's public schools and they had to be resisted. After a series of rallies, the American Republicans decided to hold a meeting right in the heart of Kensington. When they tried to gather, however, a group of Irish men and boys threw rocks and garbage at them and drove them out.¹²³ Three days later, a larger group of nativists returned to Kensington, ready for battle. Over the course of three days, they set fire to St. Michael's Church along with two Catholic schools, a convent, and a number of houses in the neighborhood, including Hugh Clark's stately home.¹²⁴ They also headed for St. Augustine's Church, which was located in a fashionable neighborhood in the center of the city. Mayor Scott tried to protect St. Augustine's, but the nativists pelted him with bricks and easily overcame his small band of constables. By the end of the night, Dr. Moriarity, who was still touring the South, had lost his church and rectory along with his prized one thousand-volume theological library.¹²⁵ On the third day of the riots, Governor Porter traveled to Philadelphia and ordered two companies of soldiers to come to the city from Harrisburg. These troops, along with the local militias, were finally able to restore order. The violence left sixteen people dead, fifty wounded, several hundred homeless, and \$250,000 worth of property destroyed.¹²⁶

In the midst of the riots, Kenrick and several priests fled the city and did not return for a week. While away, Kenrick issued a statement declaring that "in the Catholic churches, which still remain," there would be no public worship services on the following Sunday.¹²⁷ Kenrick counseled

¹²² Feldberg, *Philadelphia Riots of 1844*, 93–94. Clark, a member of the PRA, attended the National Repeal Convention in New York City.

¹²³ Ignatiev, *How the Irish became White*, 151.

¹²⁴ Clark, a successful master weaver, was the wealthiest resident in Kensington. Montgomery, "Shuttle and the Cross," 412, 425–26.

¹²⁵ George, "Very Rev. Dr. Patrick E. Moriarity," 223.

¹²⁶ Warner, *Private City*, 144–47; Clark, *Irish in Philadelphia*, 21; Feldberg, *Philadelphia Riots of 1844*, 116; Montgomery, "Shuttle and the Cross," 431–33; *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, May 16, 1844. In 1847, the County of Philadelphia awarded \$27,000 to St. Michael's Church and \$47,000 to St. Augustine's Church for property damages. See Nolan, *Most Reverend Francis Patrick Kenrick*, 336–37.

¹²⁷ Francis Patrick Kenrick to Catholic Citizens of Philadelphia, May 10, 1844, printed in Nolan, *Most Reverend Francis Patrick Kenrick*, 317.

Catholics to be patient and wait for the city to calm.

The editors of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* declared the events of May 6–8 the “most awful and bloody riot that ever occurred in the United States.”¹²⁸ Joseph Sill offered a similar judgment. After trying to help the mayor defend St. Augustine’s Church, Sill described the scene in his diary: “We returned home from this scene of barbarity about 10½ o’clock . . . sick at heart and weary from anxiety. . . . The smoke of this church will arise to heaven as a memento of the brutality of an American mob, and the deed will be remembered by the Irish for years to come.”¹²⁹

In the aftermath of the rioting, the Irish Catholics and the nativists blamed each other for the violence.¹³⁰ In June, a grand jury issued a report that generally sided with the nativists. The authors claimed that the nativists had been spurred into action by the Catholics’ efforts to ban the Bible from the public schools. They further noted that when the American Republican Party assembled for a meeting to defend Bible reading in the schools, Irish hecklers broke up the gathering.¹³¹

Angered by the grand jury’s findings, Stokes and several other prominent lay Catholics decided to take action. Stokes, who had helped to defend the churches from attack, was chosen as secretary for the Catholic committee.¹³² In its response the committee noted that Kenrick had merely asked that Catholic students be allowed to read the approved Catholic edition of the Bible while Protestant children could continue to read from the King James Version. And as for the hecklers, the committee asked that the “guilt of a small band of men” not be visited on the whole Catholic community.¹³³

While this measured statement was approved at a general meeting of Philadelphia Catholics, it did nothing to assuage the nativists.¹³⁴ On July

¹²⁸ Quoted in *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, May 16, 1844.

¹²⁹ Joseph Sill Diary, May 8, 1844. Sill was one of several wealthy Protestants who tried to protect Catholic churches during the riots. See Dale B. Light, *Rome and the New Republic: Conflict and Community in Philadelphia Catholicism between the Revolution and the Civil War* (Notre Dame, IN, 1996), 292.

¹³⁰ See *Truth Teller*, May 18, 1844.

¹³¹ At least two of the jurors were members of the American Republican Party. See Feldberg, *Philadelphia Riots of 1844*, 130.

¹³² See William A. Stokes to Gen. George Cadwalader, May 13, 1844, George Cadwalader Military Papers, Cadwalader Family Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

¹³³ *Address of the Catholic Lay Citizens . . . in Regard to the Causes of the Late Riots in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1844), 9.

¹³⁴ Light, *Rome and the New Republic*, 291. Not all Catholics were satisfied with the lay com-

4, five thousand nativists led by relatives of the “martyrs” who had died in May proudly marched through the city with banners aloft. Fearing another attack, members of St. Philip Neri parish in the heavily nativist Southwark neighborhood asked Governor Porter for weapons to defend the church. The governor allowed them to have twenty muskets from the city arsenal. When nativists saw that weapons were being brought into the church, rumors spread among them that Catholics were setting up a fortress in their midst.

On July 5, an angry mob led by former Whig congressman Charles Naylor surrounded the church. This time the authorities responded more aggressively. Several militia companies—one led by AFIR member William Henry Dunne—prepared to defend the building. While the attackers commandeered cannons, the five thousand militiamen were able to overpower them. After three days of fighting, fourteen men—mostly nativists—were dead. St. Philip’s, although damaged, was still standing.¹³⁵

“All is Idle with Repeal Now”

In September O’Connell received welcome news from an unlikely quarter. The House of Lords overturned the Repealers’ convictions and ordered them released immediately. After having served only three months, O’Connell was again free to lead the Repeal movement, and the Irish people were ready to follow him. As his carriage left Dublin’s Richmond prison, O’Connell was surrounded by thousands of well wishers.

Two days later, O’Connell appeared at a Repeal meeting and delivered a meandering address that made no reference to any new Repeal rallies. A couple of weeks later he headed back to his estate in County Kerry for an extended holiday. In October, he sent a letter from his home indicating that he was willing to accept a federalist solution. These conciliatory gestures left many Repealers baffled and discouraged. Before long, O’Connell’s chance to revive Repeal had come and gone.¹³⁶

In America the movement was even weaker. While New York

mittee’s efforts. Father John Patrick Dunne wanted a “great expression of anathema against the foul calumny of the Grand Inquest.” See Dunne to Dr. Patrick Moriarity, June 21, 1844, Augustinian Archives, Villanova, PA.

¹³⁵ Dunne’s brother, John, was the pastor of St. Philip Neri Church. Warner, *Private City*, 148–51; Elizabeth M. Geffen, “Industrial Development and Social Crisis, 1841–1854,” in *Philadelphia*, ed. Weigley, 357; *Pennsylvania Freeman*, July 18, 1844.

¹³⁶ MacDonagh, *Emancipist*, 252–57.

Repealers held a large rally at Tammany Hall in October to celebrate O'Connell's release, the Philadelphia Repealers appear to have stopped meeting.¹³⁷ There is no record of Judge Doran and the AFIR gathering after the nativist riot in May. Although the PRA continued to exist and Tyler remained its president through 1846, it too became dormant after the riots.¹³⁸ In November the editor of the *Truth Teller* lamented, "All is idle with Repeal now except for Boston and New York City."¹³⁹

The nativist riots had a dramatic influence not only on the Philadelphia Irish but also on Irish America generally, and Ireland too.¹⁴⁰ Father Mathew, who had planned on visiting Philadelphia and the rest of the country in the summer of 1844, postponed his trip when he heard the news. Writing to an American temperance leader, Mathew expressed his shock and disappointment: "I have been long and anxiously looking forward to . . . my sojourn in the states. Recent calamitous occurrences in Philadelphia have blighted all my hopes. . . . Since I heard the fearful details . . . I can speak or write or think of nothing but churches in flames and streets flowing with blood."¹⁴¹

Clearly, what doomed Doran's society—the only antislavery Repeal association in the country—was not the machinations of proslavery Democrats like Stokes and Tyler and Moriarity, but the trauma of these back-to-back nativist assaults. In the wake of such fierce attacks, no Irish Americans were interested in lobbying for any other oppressed group. For the next two decades, they would largely turn away from Irish affairs as well and focus on securing their position in America. For support they associated themselves even more closely with their Democratic allies. In the 1844 presidential race, the Democrats passed over Van Buren, Johnson, and Tyler and settled instead on James K. Polk, a little-known Tennessee slaveholder, and George Dallas, the former mayor of Philadelphia, to head their slate. The Democrats put forth an anglophobic foreign policy: they backed the annexation of Texas, which the British government opposed, and pressed for British concessions on the Oregon

¹³⁷ *Truth Teller*, Oct. 12, 1844.

¹³⁸ In 1846 Tyler tried to raise a regiment for the Mexican War from among the PRA members. Riach, "Ireland and the Campaign against American Slavery," 220; Seager, *And Tyler too*, 328–30.

¹³⁹ *Truth Teller*, Nov. 23, 1844.

¹⁴⁰ The *Dublin Pilot* reported "Horrible atrocities in America." The story is reprinted in *Truth Teller*, Sept. 7, 1844.

¹⁴¹ Rev. Theobald Mathew to Rev. John Marsh, [1844], Mathew Papers, Church Street Friary, Dublin, 9:804. Mathew put off his trip to America for five years.

boundary.¹⁴² The Whigs selected the Kentucky senator and slaveholder Henry Clay, who had run unsuccessfully in 1824 and 1832. For vice president they chose Theodore Frelinghuysen, a former senator from New Jersey with strong nativist ties.¹⁴³ By placing Frelinghuysen on the ticket, the Whigs made it clear that they were much more interested in gaining the votes of the American Republicans than those of the Irish Catholics.

In November the Irish voted as a bloc for Polk and gave him the edge over Clay in Pennsylvania and New York, which in turn allowed him to win nationwide.¹⁴⁴ A New York Whig informed Clay, "The foreign vote destroyed your election."¹⁴⁵ Another lamented, "Ireland has re-conquered the country England lost."¹⁴⁶ Indeed, by 1844 Irish Americans had found a safe home in the Democratic Party and had become one of the Democrats' most reliable constituencies.

While O'Connell continued to hold Repeal meetings, the movement never regained the influence it had in 1843. By 1845, O'Connell was ailing and trying to grapple with both the Famine and with dissent in his own ranks from militant Young Irelanders who wanted the movement to focus on Irish freedom to the exclusion of all other issues.¹⁴⁷ Despite these challenges, O'Connell continued to speak out against slavery until his death in 1847, but no Irish Americans raised their voices with his at that time or in the years following.¹⁴⁸ It would not be until 1863 that a prominent Irish American would dare challenge the pact between Irish Catholics and the Democrats. In that year, in the midst of the Civil War and in the wake of President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, Archbishop John Purcell of Cincinnati declared that he was voting Republican because of slavery, which was "an unchristian evil, opposed to the freedom of mankind." At the same time, to remind his followers that he was not the first Irish Catholic to make this claim, Purcell had O'Connell's 1843

¹⁴² Schlesinger and Israel, eds., *History of American Presidential Elections*, 1:799–801.

¹⁴³ Holt, *Rise and Fall of the Whig Party*, 188.

¹⁴⁴ Schlesinger and Israel, eds., *History of American Presidential Elections*, 1:792–98; Allen, *Invention of the White Race*, 188–89.

¹⁴⁵ Quoted in Holt, *Rise and Fall of the Whig Party*, 203.

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Schlesinger and Israel, eds., *History of American Presidential Elections*, 1:796.

¹⁴⁷ Richard P. Davis, *The Young Ireland Movement* (Dublin, 1987), 99–120; MacDonagh, *Emancipist*, 277–310.

¹⁴⁸ For example, in September 1845 O'Connell welcomed Frederick Douglass to a Repeal meeting and invited him to speak. Most of the meeting was devoted to American slavery. See *Freeman's Journal*, Sept. 30, 1845.

letter to the Cincinnati Repealers republished in his archdiocesan newspaper. While some Irish Americans approved of Purcell's efforts, more were annoyed that he was lending his support to an "anti-Catholic" movement.¹⁴⁹ O'Connell's forceful statements on slavery thus proved as troublesome for Irish Americans in 1863 as they had a generation before during the "Repeal Year" of 1843.

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¹⁴⁹ McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 82–88; Rice, *American Catholic Opinion in the Slavery Controversy*, 129–30.