

The Disruption of the Philadelphia Whigocracy: Joseph R. Chandler, Anti-Catholicism, and the Congressional Election of 1854

THE TRADITIONAL PERCEPTION of the Kansas-Nebraska Act as the key event in the political divisions of 1854 and the subsequent collapse of the Whig party has been further modified by recent articles on party realignment in antebellum Pennsylvania. Of particular importance in this connection is a study by William E. Gienapp that presents convincing evidence that linked moral and religious issues (temperance and anti-Catholicism, in particular) had substantially greater influence on the outcome of the elections of 1854 than did opposition to the Nebraska measure.¹ While the appeal of such issues would detach large numbers of voters from both major parties (and in combination with the Nebraska question produce the Democratic debacle of 1854), it was the Whigs—with their history of advocacy of moral reforms and flirtations with nativ-

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¹ The traditional view to which historians have reacted for more than a generation evolved from the work of Allan Nevins and Roy F. Nichols. It holds, in summary, that the political realignment of the 1850s resulted from the inability of the so-called second party system, the national Democratic and Whig parties of the Jacksonian era, to contain the issue of slavery extension, and that Know Nothingism represented an effort by battered Whig and conservative leaders to divert attention from the destructive issue of slavery by exploiting popular hostility to immigrants and Catholics. Recent articles on party realignment in Pennsylvania reflect an "ethnocultural" interpretation that challenges the hegemony of the slavery issue: William E. Gienapp, "Nebraska, Nativism, and Rum: The Failure of Fusion in Pennsylvania, 1854," *PMHB* 109 (1985), 425-71; James L. Huston, "The Demise of the Pennsylvania American Party, 1854-1858," *PMHB* 109 (1985), 473-97; William Gudelunas, Jr., "Nativism and the Demise of Schuylkill County Whiggery: Anti-Slavery or Anti-Catholicism," *Pennsylvania History* [hereafter, *PH*] 45 (1978), 225-36. William E. Gienapp "Nativism and the Creation of a Republican Majority in the North before the Civil War," *Journal of American History* [hereafter, *JAH*] 72 (1985), 529-59, provides a broader context.

ism—who proved susceptible to long-term defections from their popular base.

The condition of the party in Philadelphia, the state's major center of Whig strength, illustrates the problem. The Philadelphia Whigs had survived continued tension between conservatives (eventually known as "Simon Pure Whigs," "Clay Whigs," or "old line Whigs," who based their identification with their party essentially on issues of economics and political philosophy) and reformists (for whom moral and cultural issues, including nativism, defined the very nature of the party). With the emergence of Know Nothingism and its strident anti-Catholicism in 1854, however, the fragile unity of the Philadelphia Whigs finally shattered. When the Know Nothings flaunted their power in the Whig party by refusing to renominate the incumbent Second District Congressman Joseph R. Chandler, a longtime pillar of Philadelphia Whiggery and a recent convert to Catholicism, the Clay Whigs bolted and named an independent ticket with Chandler at its head, opening a breach in Whig ranks that would never be healed. The Chandler episode provides an opportunity to examine the relationship of Whigs and nativists in Philadelphia's Second District, the power of the anti-Catholic issue to override other issues in 1854, and, incidentally, the efforts of the Democrats to develop a counter-strategy to exploit anti-Catholicism.²

Joseph R. Chandler, a native of Massachusetts, had survived, indeed flourished, for decades in the traditional ambience of Philadelphia political, economic, and cultural life. For many of his fellow Philadelphians in the early 1850s, Chandler stood as an exemplar of civic-mindedness and enlightened partisanship.³ A Whig of unflagging zeal and constancy, Chandler had expounded the classic economic principles of the party—national bank, protective tariff, internal improvements—and supported its candidates in the columns of his *United States Gazette* for more than two decades, before he sold the paper to George R. Graham and Morton McMichael of the *North*

² Chandler's 1854 contest has generally escaped notice by historians. Henry R. Mueller, *The Whig Party in Pennsylvania* (New York, 1922), 214-15, provides a brief treatment.

³ Brief biographical sketches of Chandler (1792-1880) may be found in *Appleton's Cyclopedia of American Biography* (New York, 1888), 1:573; the *Dictionary of American Biography* [hereafter, *DAB*] (New York, 1929), 3:614; and the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York, 1967), 3:447.

American in 1847.⁴ He had served his party as a delegate to the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention of 1837-1838 and as a member of Philadelphia City Council from 1832 until 1848, when he resigned his post to accept a belated congressional nomination in the Second District.⁵

The Second District merited its sobriquet, "The Whig Gibraltar." With its boundaries substantially coterminous with those of the pre-consolidation City of Philadelphia, the district's population was more stable and more affluent than that of the adjacent "districts" and "suburbs." Its population growth since 1840, from 74,000 to 104,000, had been slower than that of the other areas of Philadelphia County, which had grown from 184,000 to 304,000. Most of the immigrants of the 1840s, included in the almost 122,000 people of "foreign" birth recorded for Philadelphia County in the Census of 1850, found homes outside the Second Congressional District.⁶ As a general rule,

⁴ On the sale to the *North American*, see F. E. Tourscher, ed., *Kenrick-Frenaye Correspondence* (Philadelphia, 1920), 66n; and the *Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch*, May 12, 1850. *Philadelphia Times*, July 12, 1880; *Philadelphia Press*, July 12, 1880; *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, July 12, 1880.

⁵ Chandler was selected to replace the original Whig nominee in 1848, Isaac R. Davis, who withdrew for "personal reasons." *Philadelphia North American and United States Gazette*, Sept. 8, 14, 22, 23, 1848; Roy H. Akagi, "The Pennsylvania Constitution of 1838," *PMHB* 48 (1924), 323; *Journal of the Select Council* . . . (Philadelphia, 1835-1849), passim.

⁶ The city's Cedar and New Market Wards formed part of the First Congressional District. With the reorganization of 1854, the New Market Ward became part of the Fifth Ward and was included in the Second Congressional District, while the Spruce and Lombard Wards, combined with the Cedar Ward to form the new Seventh, were no longer included: *Congressional Directory for the First Session of the Thirty-First Congress* . . . (Washington, 1850), 7; Stuart Blumin, "Mobility and Change in Ante-Bellum Philadelphia," in Stephan Thernstrom and Richard Sennett, eds., *Nineteenth-Century Cities: Essays in the New Urban History* (New Haven, 1969), 185-90; Stuart Blumin, "Residential Mobility Within the Nineteenth-Century City," in Allen F. Davis and Mark H. Haller, eds., *The Peoples of Philadelphia: A History of Ethnic Groups and Lower-class Life, 1790-1940* (Philadelphia, 1973), 37-51; J. D. B. DeBow, ed., *Compendium of the Seventh Census* (Washington, 1854), 296, 299; John Daly and Allen Weinberg, *Genealogy of Philadelphia County Subdivisions* (Philadelphia, 1966), 61, 64, 92-95; Leonard Tabachnik, "Origins of the Know Nothing Party: A Study of the Native American Party in Philadelphia, 1844-1852" (Ph. D. diss., Columbia University, 1973), 10; Elizabeth M. Geffen, "Industrial Development and Social Crisis, 1841-1854," in Russell F. Weigley, ed., *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History* (New York, 1982), 309-12; Dennis Clark, *The Irish in Philadelphia: Ten Generations of Urban Experience* (Philadelphia, 1973), 41-42; Alan N. Burstein, "Immigrants and Residence: The Irish and Germans in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia" (Ph. D. diss., University of Pennsylvania,

in Philadelphia elections before 1854 the Whigs carried the city and the Democrats the more populous county. This was one reason why many Whig leaders opposed consolidation. In its congressional representation, the Second had been serenely Whig for as long as there had been a Whig party. Joseph R. Ingersoll, the original Whig incumbent, elected in 1834, had given way to John Sergeant in 1836. When Sergeant resigned in September 1841, he was succeeded in turn by Ingersoll. Re-elected in 1842, 1844, and 1846, Ingersoll did not seek renomination in 1848, thus clearing the way for Chandler's selection.⁷

The Whig *North American* saw Chandler's nomination as a "compliment both to the individual whose merits have won him the honor, and the press, amid the labors of which . . . he acquired his reputation and the regard and confidence of his fellow citizens."⁸ Among the editors of his era, Chandler was unusual in his ability to distinguish principle from personality; the columns of the *United States Gazette* generally remained free of the *ad hominem* attacks characteristic of mid-century journalism. In Chandler's *Gazette* unrelenting analysis of a principle or a position was seldom a prelude to the denunciation of an adversary's character or morals. His editorial advocacy extended beyond those economic principles in whose defense he excelled to embrace a broad range of worthy causes, including the common school system, prison reform, and peace. As a councilman, he championed such practical causes as gas lighting, wharf and market facilities, and public safety, and matters of philanthropic concern as well. Chandler also chaired the Council committee on the Stephen Girard Will and oversaw the creation of Girard College, serving as president of its Board of Directors for several years. An active Freemason and an

1975), 103-16; Theodore Hershberg, Alan N. Burstein, Eugene P. Erickson, Stephanie W. Greenberg, and William L. Yancey, "A Tale of Three Cities: Blacks, Immigrants, and Opportunity," in Theodore Hershberg, ed., *Philadelphia: Work, Space, Family, and Group Experience in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1981), 465. There is no evidence of dramatic demographic change in the Second Congressional District between Chandler's first nomination in 1848 and his rejection in 1854.

⁷ Tabachnik, "Know Nothing Party," 270, provides a useful table of local election results, 1844-1853; "Joseph Reed Ingersoll" and "John Sergeant" in *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961* (Washington, 1961), 1105, 1581.

⁸ Sept. 22, 1848.

acknowledged authority on the philosophy and practices of the order (his lectures on the subject were collected and published), he twice served as Grand Master of the Pennsylvania Lodge.⁹ Thus widely and favorably known, Chandler had little difficulty in winning the approval of the voters of the Second in 1848 and gaining comfortable re-election two years later.¹⁰

In its "Address . . . to the Voters of Philadelphia" in 1852, the Whig Committee urged Chandler's return to the congressional post that "he filled with such such distinguished fidelity and talent." After noting that his record and abilities had won state and national recognition, the Whig statement continued: "The commercial interests of Philadelphia never had, and never can have, a more earnest or more vigorous representative; and his long-trying and noble devotion to Whig principles entitles him to the warmest gratitude and support of the Whig Gibraltar." The voters responded by returning Chandler to Congress with the largest plurality of his career.¹¹

In the 33rd Congress, he was active in the fight against the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, denouncing it as a breach of the contract made in the Compromise of 1850 (which he had supported) and the earlier Missouri Compromise. Philadelphia newspapers credited him with a leadership role in the House opposition to the Nebraska measure. "During the last session," the *North American* asserted, "at all steps of the Nebraska iniquity, he fought against it manfully, displaying quickness of resources, a tact in leadership, and an unflinching boldness which

⁹ E. P. Oberholtzer, *Philadelphia: A History of the City and Its People* (Philadelphia, n.d.), 2:220; *Times*, July 12, 1880; *North American*, July 12, 1880, which includes an extract from a John W. Forney article in *Progress*, Nov. 23, 1878; J. T. Scharf and T. Westcott, *History of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1884), 3:1969-1970; *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, July 12, 1880; *United States Gazette*, 1830-1847, passim; Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Its Growth* (Philadelphia, 1968), 86; Joseph R. Chandler, *Masonic Discourses* (Philadelphia, [1844]); Frank Gerrity, "Joseph Ripley Chandler and 'The Temporal Power of the Pope,'" *PH* 49 (1982), 106-7.

¹⁰ *North American*, Oct. 12, 1848; Sept. 9, Oct. 9, 10, 1850.

¹¹ Chandler's reported plurality was 3,088: *North American*, Oct. 11, 12, 1852. His voting record in his first two terms places him clearly in the category of "moderate": Joel H. Silbey, *The Shrine of Party: Congressional Voting Behavior, 1841-1852* (Pittsburgh, 1967), 108-35, 197, 209. In the Thirty-Second and Thirty-Third Congresses, Chandler won strong Whig support for the Speakership: *Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States*, 32nd Cong., 1st sess., 9; 33d Cong. 1st sess., 9.

won for him general admiration."¹² A sound Whig in a solid northern Whig district could expect to gain strength from support for free-soil principles. In the ordinary course of events a successful incumbent like Joseph R. Chandler might anticipate, if not routine renomination, at least the most cordial consideration by his fellow Whigs.

In his case, however, the ordinary course of events was disrupted by two developments, one personal and one political. At the personal level, Chandler at some time subsequent to the election of 1852, probably in 1853, was received into the Roman Catholic church; at the public level, the Know Nothings began, in early 1854, to have their first significant impact on Pennsylvania politics.

A Baptist and a widower, Chandler married Anna Maria H. Jones on July 3, 1833. Jones came from St. Mary's County, Maryland. She was Roman Catholic,¹³ and she brought Chandler into contact with the Catholic church. As Chandler recalled in 1875, in an account that greatly simplified a protracted and complex process: "For many years I went to the Catholic Church and carefully examined its doctrines and its claims to being the only true Church. At last when my doubting mind was satisfied, and the light of faith was vouchsafed to me, I stepped into it and followed the pathway it pointed out."¹⁴ Measured in terms of practical politics, his timing could hardly have been worse. In an altered political environment, his religious conversion threatened to end his public career.

By the early 1850s, the Whigs, in common with their Democratic

¹² *North American*, Aug. 15, 1854; *Philadelphia Sun*, Sept. 25, 1854. On April 5, Chandler delivered a major address attacking the Nebraska Bill: *Cong. Globe*, 33d Cong., 1st sess., Appendix, 468-71. He explains his support of the Compromise of 1850 in a letter to C. Dillingham, Dec. 12, 1850, Chandler Letter Book (Library of Congress).

¹³ Interview with former Mayor Richard Vaux, *Times*, July 12, 1880. Chandler's second wife was the widow of Walter Moore Jones (d. 1823), a Philadelphian. The *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society* [hereafter, *RACHS*] reports Mrs. Jones's given name as Maud, 20 (1909), 372, and Mary, 33 (1920), 249.

¹⁴ *Philadelphia Catholic Standard*, Feb. 6, 1875. If Chandler's novel, *The Beverly Family: or Home Influence of Religion* (Philadelphia, 1875), may be read as reflecting his personal experience, his decision to embrace Catholicism was profoundly influenced by the practical Christian example of his wife and a timely visit to Rome. For a summary view of the Catholic community that Chandler joined, see James Hennessey, S.J., *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (New York, 1981), 101-27. My *New Catholic Encyclopedia* article, 3:447, errs in identifying 1849 as the year in which Chandler became a Catholic.

rivals in the "second party system," found their competitive stance undercut by the blurring of differences on so many of the ideological issues that had hitherto been the stuff of the party battle.¹⁵ One by one the old issues faded. Whig control of the presidency after the election of 1848 forestalled conflict over specific issues of territorial expansion,¹⁶ and the Compromise of 1850 made the status of slavery in the territories an issue within as much as between the parties.¹⁷ Even the venerable economic issues had lost much of their power to lure voter support. The tariff issue, which had done such good service for the northern wing of the party in 1846 and 1848, could no longer be counted on to rekindle flagging enthusiasm as the economy flourished in the early 1850s. At the state level, the dispute over corporations and incorporation laws was no longer a clear-cut party issue, and, somehow, public funding of economic ventures no longer seemed vital when investment capital was abundantly available from private sources.¹⁸

This blurring of differences on issues that had long been in contention between them eroded the credibility of the major political parties as effective vehicles of change. Political leaders scrambled to find lively issues of local appeal to spark interest and win support of voters. Ethnocultural divisions, basic to party delineation in Philadelphia as elsewhere, assumed greater importance. Whig leaders eyed those issues of social control, like temperance and prohibition, so congenial to a party with an elitist and organic conception of society, and assessed their potential for winning or losing votes. For Whigs, the most vexing of such social issues were those related to immigration and nativism.¹⁹

The explosive increase in immigration in the 1840s and 1850s was a profoundly unsettling experience. The influx of more than

¹⁵ Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York, 1978), 1-16; see also Holt's earlier work, *Forging a Majority: The Formation of the Republican Party in Pittsburgh* (New Haven, 1968), 304-7.

¹⁶ Holt, *Political Crisis*, 106.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 95-99.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 48-49, 74-75, 111-18, 134-38.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 120-31; Daniel W. Howe, *The Political Culture of American Whigs* (Chicago, 1979), 11-42; Thomas Brown, *Politics and Statesmanship: Essays on the American Whig Party* (New York, 1985), 47-48.

3,000,000 immigrants in just over a decade—with 1,200,000 of them coming from famine-stricken Ireland, whose people were widely condemned as hopelessly backward and wedded to Catholic superstition—was seen by many natives as a serious and growing threat to American values and institutions, a perception intensified by a concentration of immigrant population in the nation's urban areas.²⁰

Philadelphia had shared this startling growth in foreign-born residents, and the nativist reaction to it. Philadelphia's foreign-born population had grown from 4,179 (2 percent of the total population) in 1830 to 121,699 (29.7 percent of the total population) in 1850. By the latter year, the city's population included more than 72,000 people born in Ireland and almost 23,000 of German birth, most of them Catholics in a city with a recent history of assertive Protestantism.²¹

Foreign-born Philadelphians (and their American-born children) were not isolated in ethnic "ghettos." They ordinarily resided among American natives, but with some clustering of the Irish in poorer districts on the edges of the city. The Irish competed actively in the labor market with native whites for employment as artisans. And Irish workers, to a much greater extent than the Germans, also competed with native blacks for unskilled jobs.²²

²⁰ *Historical Statistics of the United States: From Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, 1975), 1:106; *Compendium of the Seventh Census*, 123; Robert Kelley, *The Cultural Pattern in American Politics: The First Century* (New York, 1979), 172-73; Clark, *Irish in Philadelphia*, 34-35; Dennis Clark, "The Philadelphia Irish: Persistent Presence," in Davis and Haller, eds., *Peoples of Philadelphia*, 135-37. For contemporary views of the Irish, see Dale T. Knobel, *Paddy and the Republic: Ethnicity and Nationalism in Antebellum America* (Middletown, 1986).

²¹ Philadelphia, as the name was generally used, included not only the City of Philadelphia, a political entity extending from the Delaware River to the Schuylkill and from the present South Street, then Cedar, to Vine, but also the surrounding "districts" and "suburbs." Daly and Weinberg, *Philadelphia County Subdivisions*, 93-95; Tabachnik, "Know Nothing Party," 18; Geffen, "Industrial Development and Social Crisis, 1841-1854," 309, 355-57; Michael Feldberg, *The Philadelphia Riots of 1844: A Study of Ethnic Conflict* (Westport, 1975), 86-87; Ray A. Billington, *Protestant Crusade: A Study in the Origins of American Nativism* (Chicago, 1938; re-issue, New York, 1952), 183-84.

²² The heaviest concentrations of Irish immigrants were in Southwark, Moyamensing, Grays Ferry, Kensington, and Port Richmond: Clark, *Irish in Philadelphia*, 41-42; Burstein, "Immigrants and Residence," 117-18; Hershberg and others, "A Tale of Three Cities," Hershberg, ed., *Philadelphia: Work, Space, Family*, 467-80. Hershberg's Table 4, "Occupational Distribution of Males, 18+, by Ethnicity, 1850, 1880 . . ." (p. 471), indicates

Adjustment to Philadelphia's changing ethnic and religious mix was complicated by the rapidity of general population growth and the impact of technological change on employment patterns. Strikes, riots, and civil commotion were common, as conflicts rooted in a variety of economic, political, and cultural differences flared into physical violence. The anti-Catholic riots which erupted in Kensington and Southwark in 1844 were unusual, therefore, only in their extent and ferocity. The 1844 riots, however, also reflected effective political exploitation of a resurgent hostility to Catholicism and its Irish adherents, a resurgence fueled by a controversy over the compulsory use of the King James Bible in the common schools.²³

The events of 1844 generated a political force, the Native American party, that would play a significant role in Philadelphia politics through the decade after the riots and, as Leonard Tabachnik has cogently argued, was directly linked to the Know Nothing movement of 1854.²⁴ This new party grew out of a meeting of resentful Democrats from the Spring Garden District in December 1843. Alarmed by the rising influence of immigrants in party and government and convinced that the established parties were both corrupted and compromised by their pursuit of immigrant votes, the dissident Democrats concluded that it was necessary to reform from without, by creating a new party committed to insuring the political supremacy of the native-born. Its platform called for the exclusion of immigrants from

that in 1850 83.5% of German and 54.7% of Irish workers were classified at the occupational level of artisan or above, as compared to 89.1% of the native whites; 45.1% of the Irish and 77.3% of the blacks were classified as unskilled.

²³ Elizabeth M. Geffen, "Violence in Philadelphia in the 1840's and 1850's," *PH* 36 (1969), 381-410; Geffen, "Industrial Development and Social Crisis," passim; Michael Feldberg, "Urbanization as a Cause of Violence: Philadelphia as a Test Case," in Davis and Haller, eds., *Peoples of Philadelphia*, 53-69; Feldberg, *Philadelphia Riots*, 120-22, 162-74; Bruce Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1850* (Philadelphia, 1980), 107-203; Hugh Nolan, "Francis Patrick Kenrick, First Coadjutor Bishop," in James F. Connelly, ed., *History of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1976), 167-86; Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 220-37; Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1890* (Cambridge, 1978), 67-75.

²⁴ My account of the development of the Native American party relies heavily on Tabachnik, "Know Nothing Party." Tabachnik (pp. 3-8) emphasizes its reformist nature, argues for its classification as a traditional third party, and stresses the continuity between it and the later Know Nothing party. His evidence suggests, nonetheless, that the party's strongest appeal derived from its anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic stance.

public office and the extension of the residency requirement for naturalization (and voting) from five to twenty-one years. The Native American ward associations used the Bible issue to create the public climate in which the riots of 1844 occurred, and the riots, in turn, enhanced the appeal of a new party and facilitated its development of a strong organization and effective leadership. In the local elections in the fall of 1844 the Native Americans won more votes than either of the major parties.²⁵

Lewis Levin, the dominant figure in the party through its first several years, came to it from a politicized temperance movement, frustrated in its efforts to influence the nominating process of the established parties on behalf of temperance candidates.²⁶ A blunt, direct man who did not shrink from physical violence, Levin made skillful use of his editorship of the *Daily Sun* and his exceptional oratorical ability to establish his leadership in the tension-packed months of 1844.²⁷ The dominance of Levin, who saw an integral connection between Protestantism and American republicanism and viewed Roman Catholicism as a threat to both, meant the submergence of the essentially political nativism, less explicitly anti-Catholic, identified with a competing faction of the party. His *Daily Sun*, the longest-lived of Philadelphia's nativist newspapers, won to the support of the Native Americans a powerful cross section of the city's prominent clergy by consistently attacking the doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic church with a vehemence worthy of Dr. Joseph Berg, the scholarly pastor of the Race Street [German Reformed] Church (1837-1852) and the city's most prominent anti-Catholic, whose ser-

²⁵ Tabachnik, "Know Nothing Party," 13, 41-51, 270. The Whigs outpolled the Native Americans in the City of Philadelphia but ran poorly in the outlying districts. The Democrats ran third in the city and lost Kensington, the Northern Liberties, Spring Garden, and Southwark to the Native Americans as well.

²⁶ Tabachnik, "Know Nothing Party," 23-70.

²⁷ Feldberg, *Philadelphia Riots*, 99-100, 103-4, cites Levin's unprovoked assault on a Philadelphia political adversary just before the riots of 1844. Another account refers to Levin's flight from Mississippi to avoid the consequences of wounding an opponent in a duel, *DAB* (New York, 1933), 11:200-201; Tabachnik, "Know Nothing Party," 57-60, emphasizes the importance of Levin's "eloquent and fiery speeches and editorials" during the riots; *Sunday Dispatch*, March 16, April 13, 1851, has interesting essays on Levin as editor and orator.

mons Levin regularly published.²⁸ Levin also sought to appeal to the city's artisans (politically adrift since the demise of the workingmen's associations) who were sensitive to the perceived Catholic attack on the common schools.²⁹ The Native American party, identifying itself with the workingman's cause, developed a democratic, anti-capitalist, anti-industrialization platform, which reflected the theories of the French socialist, Louis Blanc.³⁰

Finally, Levin favored an open party (with rank-and-file participation in the nominating process) and coalition politics.³¹ From its beginning the Native American party was supported by many Whigs, particularly the so-called *North American* faction of that party. Running under their own label from 1844 to 1847, the Nativists fared reasonably well. Levin was twice elected to Congress from the First District, and other Nativists won lesser state and local offices. But in 1848 they agreed to a fusion ticket with the Whigs. The Native Americans felt handicapped by their inability to field state-wide and national candidates, and the Whigs were fearful that, unable to attract the full anti-Democratic vote, theirs would be a moribund party.³² Despite the uneasiness evoked by divergent, even contradictory, economic principles,³³ the fusion ticket carried Philadelphia by margins substantial enough to decide the state's gubernatorial and presidential contests and to continue Levin in Congress. In 1850, however, the coalition faltered; dissension in the ranks of the Whigs split the anti-Democratic vote, and Thomas B. Florence, a Democrat, was able to defeat Levin.³⁴

Rebellion in his own party had also contributed to Levin's rejection.

²⁸ Tabachnik, "Know Nothing Party," 60-61, 83-89; in 1852, Berg, in a protest against what he viewed as latitudinarian and Romanizing tendencies within the German Reformed church, resigned and led most of his Race Street congregation over to the Second Dutch Reformed Church, *DAB* (New York, 1929), 2:213-14.

²⁹ Tabachnik, "Know Nothing Party," 90-91.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 191-202.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 52-57.

³² *Ibid.*, 179-90.

³³ The Whigs, for example, saw higher tariffs as the solution to economic woes, but the Nativists, attributing the depressed condition of labor to low wages and the long profits taken by manufacturers, urged experimentation with employee cooperatives. *Ibid.*, 191-206.

³⁴ John F. Coleman, *The Disruption of the Pennsylvania Democracy, 1848-1860* (Harrisburg, 1975), 35-39; Mueller, *Whig Party*, 176.

A "purist" or "True Blue" faction (headed by Dr. Reynell Coates and in existence since 1845 as the public facet of a secret society, the "United Sons of America") insisted on a secret, oath-bound organization and the restoration of a separate and distinct Native American party label. The "True Blues," through their newspaper *The American Banner*, declared war on Levin and fought openly for control of the party. Thus divided, the Native Americans ran poorly in the elections of 1849, 1850, and 1851. By the end of 1851 Levin had recovered control of the party, but the "True Blues" preferred electoral defeat to "amalgamation" with either of the old parties and continued to resist Levin's coalition politics.³⁵

In a gesture of reconciliation, made easier by the willingness of the "True Blues" to open the party to foreign-born citizens who shared its principles, Levin promoted a national convention of "nativist" groups. The convention assembled at Trenton in July 1852 and organized the American party, a grouping for national political action of anti-Catholic and nationalist elements already in existence in several cities. The new party was dominated by Philadelphians; the party's first national chairman was a Philadelphian, Dr. Coates, as was a majority of its executive committee. When the original presidential ticket of the Americans (Daniel Webster and George C. Washington, candidates accepted by the "True Blues" only with great reluctance) disintegrated, the "True Blues" and their allies on the executive committee overrode Levin's objections and put forward their own presidential slate (Jacob Broom and Reynell Coates). Levin withheld his support. Since the Whigs, his traditional allies, had already eschewed coalition with the nativists to seek immigrant and Catholic votes for Winfield Scott, Levin turned to the Democrat, Franklin Pierce. Pierce carried Philadelphia, and the Whigs lost what had previously been a safe seat in the Third Congressional District.³⁶

Under the "American" label, the party, still troubled by internal contentions, continued to lose local elections, but its secret, oath-bound affiliates were apparently more successful in mobilizing willing defenders of a Protestant and republican America. The secret order first came to general notice in Philadelphia when several delegations

³⁵ Tabachnik, "Know Nothing Party," 215-38, 250.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 251-54.

of Know Nothings marched in the parade celebrating the achievement of city-county consolidation in March 1854. Its first great political triumph came three months later when the Know Nothings were credited with the key role in the American and Whig sweep of the municipal elections, the first in the newly consolidated city.³⁷

The political impact of Know Nothingism was not confined to Philadelphia. It had significant influence, in 1854, on the outcomes of elections elsewhere in the Middle Atlantic states and in New England as well. In their explanations of the collapse of the Whig party and the consequent disintegration of the "second party system," ethnocultural interpreters of American political history have assigned greater weight to divisions over anti-Catholicism and opposition to immigration, the issues seen as animating the Know Nothing movement, and rather less weight to an overriding issue of slavery expansion than has traditionally been suggested.³⁸ For many northern voters the

³⁷ Ibid., 255-56; Mueller, *Whig Party*, 211-12. For Know Nothingism in Pennsylvania, see also Warren F. Hewitt, "The Know Nothing Party in Pennsylvania," *PH* 2 (1935), 69-85; James L. Huston, "The Demise of the Pennsylvania American Party, 1854-1858," passim; Coleman, *Pennsylvania Democracy*, 65-69; Sr. M. Theophane Geary, *A History of Third Parties in Pennsylvania* (Washington, 1938), 164-71; and Mueller, *Whig Party*, 208-25. A. L. Hayes to James Buchanan, May 8, 1854, Buchanan Papers (Historical Society of Pennsylvania [hereafter, HSP]), reports the Know Nothings' dramatic intervention in the school board elections in Lancaster, generally accepted as Pennsylvania's first instance of electoral activity by the secret order.

³⁸ In addition to the recent articles cited in note 1, the ethnocultural interpretation is developed in Ronald Formisano, *The Birth of Mass Political Parties: Michigan, 1827-1861* (Princeton, 1971); Paul Kleppner, *The Cross of Culture: A Social Analysis of Midwestern Politics, 1850-1900* (New York, 1970); Paul Kleppner, *The Third Electoral System, 1853-1902: Parties, Voters, and Political Cultures* (Chapel Hill, 1979); see also Joel H. Silbey, ed., *The Transformation of American Politics, 1840-1860* (Englewood Cliffs, 1967); Joel H. Silbey, *The Partisan Imperative: The Dynamics of American Politics Before the Civil War* (New York, 1985); and Kelley, *Cultural Pattern in American Politics*. Especially useful for an understanding of the Know Nothing phenomenon and its impact on the major parties are four works by Michael F. Holt. These include *Political Crisis and Forging A Majority*, both cited above; "The Politics of Impatience: The Origins of Know Nothingism," *JAH* 60 (1973), 309-33; and "The Antimasonic and Know Nothing Parties," in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., ed., *History of U.S. Political Parties* (New York, 1973), 1:575-737. See also Stephen Maizlish, "The Meaning of Nativism and the Crisis of the Union: The Know Nothing Movement in the Antebellum North," in Stephen Maizlish and John J. Kushma, eds., *Essays on American Antebellum Politics, 1840-1860* (College Station, 1982), 166-98. William G. Shade, "Politics and Parties in Jacksonian America," *PMHB* 110 (1986), 483-507, offers useful insights into the historiography of Jacksonian party divisions.

political, economic, and religious threats posed by the flood of immigrants possessed an immediacy that the threat of slavery in the territories lacked. "To many in the North," as Michael F. Holt has shrewdly observed, "the major threat in 1854 was not that the presence of black slaves might keep them out of Kansas and Nebraska, but that the presence of immigrant Catholics in the East might force them to go there."³⁹

In the mid-fifties several pressures converged. The disruption of established economic patterns threatened the native artisan with unemployment or more difficult working conditions—a threat intensified by increased competition from immigrants. The sheer volume of immigrants, most of them Catholic, strengthened traditional fears of the papacy and the Roman church. Contemporary incidents underscored such general anti-Catholic perceptions. Archbishop John Hughes challenged that bastion of non-sectarian Protestantism, the common school, and ousted lay boards of trustees from control of church property; Archbishop Gaetano Bedini, the Pope's representative, toured the United States purportedly to consolidate Catholic political power; James Campbell, notorious trafficker in immigrant votes, was named Postmaster General; Orestes A. Brownson, an apostate Protestant, proclaimed the temporal authority of the Pope—all dramatized the gravity and urgency of the problem. Whatever reformist aspirations might be associated with the Know Nothings' impatience with the "old politics" of Whigs and Democrats, they mobilized their supporters with an appeal to fear—fear of the looming political power of the immigrants and the Church of Rome.⁴⁰

Contemporary accounts suggest that in the early stages of the movement's development at least, Know Nothing lodges followed this general plan: At meetings restricted to members bound by oath to exclude Catholics from public office by all means within the law, they would decide on nominees. They would then attempt, by concerted voting in the open caucuses and ward meetings, to control the selection of delegates to the city, county, and congressional district conventions at which the major political parties chose their candidates.

³⁹ Holt, *Political Crisis*, 161.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 162; Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 289-321; Henry Slicer to James Buchanan, June 10, 1854, Buchanan Papers.

These tactics could, and frequently did, result in the sudden elevation of political unknowns, the "new men" that the movement's anti-party rhetoric required, at the expense of established candidates and party leaders.⁴¹ With so many of its adherents already sympathetic to the anti-Catholic and nationalist goals of the Know Nothings, the Philadelphia Whig party proved especially susceptible to this type of manipulation.

After the municipal election the leaders of both major parties evidently accepted the potency of the Know Nothings' appeal and the effectiveness of their organization as political realities. By early August 1854, it was widely rumored in political circles that the Whigs would drop Chandler as a congressional candidate. In the *North American*, Chandler's frequent ally, Morton McMichael, without specifically alluding to the Know Nothings, urged caution upon the Whig city convention: "It should make no choice, nor impair its right to make one, until all candidates are distinctly and regularly before it, and then the selections . . . ought to be determined by a deliberate and independent regard for the interest of the public and the credit of the party." Above all, McMichael warned, delegates should go into the convention "untrammelled by promises or engagements to any body."⁴² A few days later, reacting to reports that Chandler would not be renominated, the *North American*, "without stopping to discuss the reasons" for the Whig decision, expressed its great regret and proceeded to a flattering recital of his abilities and achievements. "Now if such a man as this is to be put aside," it continued, "for no reason we are aware of connected with his official relations, it certainly

⁴¹ Holt, "Antimasonic and Know Nothing Parties," 593-94; Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 384-85; Formisano, *Birth of Mass Political Parties*, 249-50. Carleton Beal, *Brass-Knuckle Crusade: The Great Know Nothing Conspiracy, 1820-1860* (New York, 1960), 131-37, provides a popular account of Know Nothing proceedings; see also *Sunday Dispatch*, March 25, 1855.

⁴² Aug. 10, 1854. In 1854, the *North American*, managed and edited by its principal owner, Morton McMichael, was strongly identified with the old-line Whig leadership. Early in his association with the *North American*, McMichael and George R. Graham had negotiated the purchase of Chandler's *United States Gazette*; the combined journal became the undisputed voice of the Philadelphia commercial community. A high-priced, home-delivered newspaper, the *North American* supplied the urban elite with a dignified communication of both solid news and Whig principles. Robert Bloom, "Morton McMichael's *North American*," *PMHB* 77 (1963), 167-80; Elwyn B. Robinson, "The *North American*: Advocate of Protection," *PMHB* 64 (1940), 345-55.

will behoove those who pass him over to see that he is replaced by someone at least comparatively competent to succeed him." "Though temporary influences may put Mr. Chandler down," the *North American* concluded in veiled language, "it is by no means certain they will put those up who control them in that direction."⁴³

Others were less reticent about the reasons for Chandler's political demise. Five days before the meeting of the Whigs of the Second Congressional District, a Democratic correspondent reported current rumors to James Buchanan in London:

It is rumored that the Whig Party and the Know Nothings, will not renominate the Hon. J.R. Chandler, as he is a Catholic; some say they intend nominating a young man by the name of Gossler. If they should it is possible that the Clay Whigs will run Chandler, and the Democrats if they could be prevailed upon, which it is not likely they will, it is thought, as they cannot carry a candidate of their own, might possibly support Mr. Chandler, he being rejected on account of his religion.⁴⁴

As the time for the Second District convention neared, the *North American* once again urged the responsibility of the delegates to select the fittest candidates, and on August 24, when the initial session of the convention was opened to nominations, Chandler's name was one of several presented. Before the adjourned convention met again on September 1, the *North American*, by now apparently resigned to Chandler's elimination, again prodded the Second District Whigs to find a candidate of the highest character to represent their important district. "He should have the age which gives maturity of character, and combine with that important requisite great natural talents, thorough intellectual discipline and cultivation, extensive information, intimate practical acquaintance with the interests of Philadelphia, and eminent social standing."⁴⁵ Despite alleged shortcomings in virtually every item in the *North American's* prescription, Jacob Gossler led all contenders through seven ballots; in each instance, however, he fell short (by one vote on the last three ballots) of the majority required

⁴³ August 15, 1854.

⁴⁴ Daniel T. Jenks to James Buchanan, Aug. 18, 1854, Buchanan Papers.

⁴⁵ Aug. 24, 27, 30, Sept. 1, 1854.

to nominate. The incumbent Chandler received not a single vote.⁴⁶ Resistance to perceived Know Nothing manipulation surfaced also in the Whig city convention, where a resolution was introduced which, after identifying the Know Nothings as a secret political order whose "existence . . . is prejudicial to the true interest of this country and detrimental to the maintenance of American institutions," called upon the delegates to disavow in writing any connection with the Know Nothings and to release members of the Whig party from any obligation to support any Whig candidate "who refuses by written pledge to repudiate all organizations of a proscriptive character." The resolution failed to survive a motion to postpone indefinitely: 31 delegates voted to kill the anti-Know Nothing proposal; only 14 voted to bring it before the convention.⁴⁷

Before the Second District convention met again on September 5, it was, according to the *Sunday Dispatch*, "common town talk" that the "nominees for public office are selected in the Know Nothing lodges. . . ." ⁴⁸ On the first ballot Gossler received nine votes, but a new candidate, Job R. Tyson, a civic leader and son-in-law of merchant prince Thomas P. Cope, showed considerable staying power and on the sixth ballot defeated Gossler by eight votes.⁴⁹ The shift

⁴⁶ The *Sunday Dispatch*, Sept. 3, 1854, described Gossler as "a young lawyer, who was a [Whig] member of the legislature for one session [1851-1852] and made no mark which added to his reputation or influence. In point of talents, integrity, standing, and that social influence which is necessary in Congress for the representation of a great city like Philadelphia, there is no comparison whatever between Mr. Chandler and Mr. Gossler. The former commanded respect in the National Councils; the latter, however well he may behave himself, can never attain as elevated a position as that which is held by the present representative." While the *Dispatch*'s characterization may be discounted as newspaper rhetoric, Gossler certainly lacked the social and political stature of Chandler, Ingersoll, and Sergeant, the three men the Whigs had previously chosen to represent the Second District. *Cummings' [Philadelphia] Evening Bulletin*, Sept. 1, 1854; *North American*, Sept. 1, 1854.

⁴⁷ *Cummings' Evening Bulletin*, Sept. 1, 1854; *Philadelphia Catholic Herald*, Sept. 7, 1854.

⁴⁸ The *Sunday Dispatch* claimed independence from party and faction, but reserved for itself "full liberty to discuss questions of public concern, fully and impartially." Thompson Westcott, the historian of Philadelphia, was one of its editors for more than forty years. Free-swinging and trenchant in its comments, the *Dispatch*, in 1854, while vaguely Whiggish and embracing a generalized nativism, was hostile to Know Nothings and their Whig collaborators; the successful Whig-Know Nothing candidate for mayor, Robert T. Conrad, was frequently criticized: *Sunday Dispatch*, May 14, 1848; Oct. 6, 1850; May 28, June 11, Sept. 3, 1854.

⁴⁹ *North American*, Sept. 6, 1854; *Cummings' Evening Bulletin*, Sept. 6, 1854. For cordial

of votes was so abrupt as to suggest that a bargain had been struck with the Know Nothings. A few weeks later, the *Sunday Dispatch* advanced the following reconstruction of the Whig proceedings:

"The Regular [Second District] Whig Convention," (so called) was, it is asserted and generally believed, composed of a majority of Know Nothings, who were pledged to support Jacob Gossler for Congress. It was proclaimed in the streets weeks beforehand that Mr. Gossler was to be the nominee, and great was the general surprise and indignation thereat. The feeling was so strong that the majority of the convention became frightened, and, although they were instructed and elected for the purpose of nominating Mr. Gossler, they were afraid to consummate the transaction. In this dilemma it was thought better to nominate a compromise candidate. If Mr. Gossler had been nominated, there was every possibility of a split—a disaster not coveted by the Know Nothings. They could not afford to lose Whig assistance, and the secession of the rank and file might have conclusively placed their candidate in a minority in the returns. . . . Finally with Know Nothing aid, Job R. Tyson was nominated as the "The Regular Whig candidate."⁵⁰

In the heat of the campaign, the rabidly Democratic *Pennsylvanian* would charge that Tyson had played a sly game in manipulating his application to join the Know Nothings in such a way as to leave him in a position to deny membership when queried by the Whigs and affirm it when quizzed by the Know Nothings. Tyson indignantly denied such charges and threatened the *Pennsylvanian* editors with a suit for criminal libel.⁵¹ The *Sunday Dispatch* reported the rumor that Tyson was a member of the secret order, but its greater concern was

appraisals of Tyson, see Roy F. Nichols's article in *DAB* (New York, 1936), 19:103-4; and H. L. Carson, *A History of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1940), 1:201-3.

⁵⁰ *Sunday Dispatch*, Oct. 1, 1854.

⁵¹ Philadelphia *Daily Pennsylvanian*, Sept. 30, Oct. 3, 1854; *Sun*, Oct. 9, 1854. Acquired by friends of Buchanan in 1845, the *Pennsylvanian* remained a Buchanan organ until its demise on the eve of the Civil War. Although conducted with considerable journalistic verve by John W. Forney, A. Boyd Hamilton, and their successors, the *Pennsylvanian*, constantly teetering on the brink of financial collapse, survived only through repeated infusions of capital from Buchanan's allies. In 1854 it was relentless in its attacks on Know Nothing principles and in its efforts to strip away the Know Nothing veil of secrecy. See Elwyn B. Robinson, "The *Pennsylvanian*: Organ of the Democracy," *PMHB* 62 (1938), 350-60; Coleman, *Pennsylvania Democracy*, 11, 53.

with what it viewed as his personal unsuitability as a representative of the common people, an unsuitability it portrayed in considerable detail.⁵²

When the American party of the Second District met on September 5, Gossler's name was among those offered in nomination. A week later, in the American convention's second session, Gossler ran neck-and-neck with George R. Graham for four ballots. On the sixth ballot, with the field narrowed to two, Gossler took a two-vote lead over Graham. One delegate proclaimed that he would vote for no candidate who refused to acknowledge himself a member of the party and stalked out of the convention rather than vote for Gossler. Amid scenes of confusion, Gossler was declared the nominee,⁵³ but he would later withdraw in favor of Tyson.⁵⁴

Meanwhile, Whigs hostile to Know Nothing influence, the "Simon Pure" or "Clay" Whigs, arranged the election of delegates to a convention to nominate an "independent *real* Whig candidate." When the "Independent Whigs of the Second Congressional District," as they formally styled themselves, met on September 7, Chandler's was

⁵² The *Dispatch*, Oct. 1, 1854, commented that Tyson "had but little personal popularity." His manners, it asserted, are "cold and uninviting," and he is lacking in "suavity" and warmth. As a councilman, he was so ambitious to be leader that he alienated his colleagues and was "singularly unfortunate in his career." Tyson, the *Dispatch* conceded, deserved his hard-won literary reputation, and was to be commended for his interest in the city's history, but despite his advocacy of benevolent and useful schemes, he has never been seen as one of the people. "Among those who do not know Mr. Tyson," the *Dispatch* concluded, "he is more likely to have admirers than with those who do." Tyson had never "distinguished himself in the party's cause" and "his nomination has been received without any bursts of applause." Roy F. Nichols's characterization of Tyson's congressional term as "inconspicuous" (*DAB*, 19:103) suggests that there was some substance to the *Dispatch*'s caustic appraisal.

⁵³ *North American*, Sept. 13, 1854; *Cummings' Evening Bulletin*, Sept. 6, 13, 1854. The *Bulletin*, generally identified as a Whig paper, was more comfortable with the Know Nothing alliance than was the *North American*. Some Philadelphians suspected that Alexander Cummings, the *Bulletin*'s publisher, was an officer of the secret order, for which, see *Catholic Herald*, Oct. 12, 1854.

⁵⁴ *Sun*, Sept. 25, 1854. The *Public Ledger*, a penny paper with the city's largest circulation, asserted, and generally maintained, an independent stance. In the mid-fifties, however, the *Bulletin* would charge it with partiality toward the Democrats, and there is evidence of a tilt in the direction of Bigler, the Democratic candidate, in the gubernatorial election of 1854: Elwyn B. Robinson, "The *Public Ledger*: An Independent Newspaper," *PMHB* 64 (1940), 43-55; H. C. Seisenring to William Bigler, Aug. 8, 1854, Bigler Papers (HSP).

one of five names, including Tyson's, placed in nomination.⁵⁵ In a second session, several days later, Chandler would win endorsement over Tyson by a vote of fifteen to one. In accepting the nomination, Chandler pledged himself to "an unfailing vigilance against all inroads and innovations which may have for their object a weakening of the rights which the Constitution guarantees to every citizen of the United States." To the committee that waited upon him with formal notice of his nomination, Chandler spoke confidently: "While you have asserted in your nominations the great principle of social, political, and religious liberty, we will defend that principle in the canvass and vindicate it in the election."⁵⁶

The excitement in the Second District was the clash of Whig with Whig. With their candidate, John Hamilton, Jr., the traditional underdog, the Democrats eagerly worked to widen Whig division. The combative *Pennsylvanian* denounced the Know Nothing attempt to impose a religious test for office: "To lay it down as an axiom that a Catholic is, on account of his adoption of that creed, necessarily unfitted to discharge political duties, faithfully and honestly, is as monstrous, absurd and ungenerous a course of proceeding as could possibly be adopted." Noting its disagreement with his Whig principles, the *Pennsylvanian* nonetheless commended Chandler for discharging every public duty that he devolved upon him with "fidelity, uprightness, and patriotic zeal."⁵⁷ The independent *Sunday Dispatch* lauded Chandler's record in Congress as one that did him honor and reflected credit on Philadelphia. "No prevarication can disguise the fact that with all these good qualities Mr. Chandler was rejected by the Regular Know Nothing Whig convention upon account of his religion." If the "pure Whigs" had borne this exclusion in silence, "the fate of the party in this city would have been inevitably sealed." Rejecting rumors to the contrary, the *Dispatch* expressed confidence

⁵⁵ Chandler's allies nominated other local candidates at city and county conventions: *North American*, Sept. 8, 12, 14, 19, Oct. 5, 1854; *Sun*, Sept. 12, 1854; *Sunday Dispatch*, Sept. 3, 1854.

⁵⁶ *Catholic Herald*, Sept. 21, 1854. The pro-temperance *Cummings' Evening Bulletin*, Sept. 16, 1854, noted that the collation at Chandler's reception for delegates was "served up in temperance style; no strong drink being on the table."

⁵⁷ Sept. 11, 1854; see also Sept. 13, 18, 1854.

that Democrat Hamilton would stay in the race, and predicted that "there is fun and excitement ahead."⁵⁸

"Philadelphia has never been more worthily represented than by Mr. C.," said the nativist *Sun* with unusual tolerance. "Catholic or Protestant—he is American by birth and we should prefer his election in preference to any mediocre new man of Whig proclivities."⁵⁹ With the nomination of Tyson, however, the *Sun* became increasingly critical of Chandler. It forcefully rebutted the contention that the failure of the Regular Whigs to nominate him involved a denial of "some fundamental principle of the American governmental system." Three times the congressional nominee of his party, Chandler had pledged at his third endorsement, the *Sun* asserted, not to seek a subsequent nomination. The Whig decision, therefore, involved not religious discrimination but the principle of rotation-in-office. The *Sun* reported that some of the delegates at the Regular Whig convention, Chandler supporters in the past, professed ignorance of his shift in religious affiliation. It was the Democrats, charged the *Sun*, who were determined to "make a sectarian issue in Philadelphia, whether we will or not," and the nativist paper sharply condemned Chandler for allowing himself to be used in this effort.⁶⁰ "He is the bigot—he the sectarian politician—he the incendiary who would madly wave the torch of religious fanaticism to endanger the sacred flame of liberty!"⁶¹ As the canvass continued, the *Sun* flailed away at Chandler, castigating him as "a thrall to the Pope," "a Papist slave,"⁶² and a "sectarist . . . fresh from the footstool and toe-kissing of Pope Pius. . . ."⁶³ It accused him of hypocrisy in seeking to depict "himself as the type of sufferer for conscience[']s sake" and

⁵⁸ Oct. 1, 1854.

⁵⁹ Sept. 9, 1854; see also Sept. 16, 1854. The *Sun*, established in 1843 and identified with Lewis Levin and the old guard of the American party, was the surviving Nativist daily in the city. William D. Baker and Col. James Wallace were its editors in the mid-fifties. (The rival *American Banner*, the organ of the "True Blue" faction, had ceased publication in 1853.)

⁶⁰ Sept. 16, 1854.

⁶¹ Sept. 18, 1854.

⁶² Oct. 3, 1854.

⁶³ Sept. 25, 1854.

in accusing his party, which had richly rewarded him over the years, of "intolerance and proscription."⁶⁴

The *Catholic Herald*, under the editorship of Henry Major, a former Episcopal clergyman,⁶⁵ rarely displayed interest in political matters. With the election of Robert T. Conrad as mayor of the consolidated city and the currency of reports that municipal appointments would be restricted to native Protestants, however, the *Herald's* stance changed.⁶⁶ In Chandler's exclusion Major found further evidence of a "proscriptive" policy:

Why was a faithful and experienced representative thus set aside, and a novice substituted in his place? It was simply because Mr. Chandler, since his last election, has dared to exercise the rights of conscience and become a Catholic. The Convention by which he was set aside, was composed mainly of Know Nothings, and under their influence Mr. Chandler was repudiated in accordance with the avowed intention of that faction of proscribing every Catholic from office. It was not even because Mr. Chandler was a foreigner, for he is a native of the country, and of . . . Puritan stock. Nor was it even pretended that Mr. Chandler was deficient in the requisite ability for the post.⁶⁷

As election day neared, the *Herald* advised its readers: "It is but just

⁶⁴ Oct. 3, 1854. In separate articles on Oct. 5, 1854, the *Sun* reported that the Democrats had withdrawn their candidates in two races and "resolved to support Messrs. Chandler and McGrath, two Catholics and Henry Clay Whigs," and that Bishop Michael O'Connor of Pittsburgh, one of the *Sun's* favorite targets, had arrived in Philadelphia to energize the congressional campaigns of Col. Thomas B. Florence, a Southwark Democrat, and Chandler. "The trouble of Mr. Chandler and the grievous condition of Col. Florence have called him [O'Connor] here to rally the faithful and give Americans a lesson in Italian politics." Thomas McGrath, candidate for Recorder, had already published an affidavit attesting that he was a native of Philadelphia and a Protestant; a second affidavit by McGrath denied any connection with the Know Nothings: *Public Ledger*, Sept. 28, 1854.

⁶⁵ Martin I. J. Griffin, "Notes on the Late Henry Major . . .," *RACHS* 14 (1903), 259-63.

⁶⁶ June 22, 29, 1854. Four front-page columns of the *Catholic Herald*, July 27, 1854, were given over to a response by Robert Tyler to a pro-Know Nothing letter published in *Cummings' Evening Bulletin*, July 8, 1854. Tyler, son of former President John Tyler, had taken up residence in Philadelphia in 1843. Through his wife and her father, Thomas A. Cooper, the Irish tragedian, he became interested in Irish causes and was elected president of Philadelphia's Irish Repeal Association in 1844. In later years he was a close associate of James Buchanan and chaired the Executive Committee of the Pennsylvania Democratic party: *DAB* (New York, 1936), 19:94.

⁶⁷ Sept. 21, 1854.

and right that they who are opposed to . . . proscription, whether Protestant or Catholic, should come to his [Chandler's] rescue." Never, the *Herald* insisted, would it urge the support of any candidate merely because he is Catholic, "but when an attempt is made to put him down on that ground we feel that there is a great principle involved, the principle of equal rights and religious freedom, [and] we deem it our duty as a fellow citizen to give him our support."⁶⁸

At a Democratic mass meeting in mid-September, the legend "Civil and Religious Liberty" was displayed in flaming letters at the front of the main rostrum.⁶⁹ Despite misgivings by some of their number that they should have been made to "bear the sin of *Catholicism*,"⁷⁰ the Democrats moved to defend religious liberty. However burdensome the defense of Catholic liberties might be, the Democrats could scarcely expect to hold the loyalty of their immigrant supporters if they failed to undertake it. But the Whig State Committee, in an allusion to the Second District, attempted to turn the charge of religious intolerance against the Democrats with the accusation that they invited Roman Catholics "to vote for a candidate for Congress simply because he belongs to their church."⁷¹ "My opinion is," wrote one Democratic observer especially sensitive to the Know Nothing movement, "that its existence will be but temporary, but for a year or so it may do us much harm."⁷²

A few days before the election, the Whig Committee of Superintendence, the group responsible for the conduct of the local Whig campaign, made its one formal effort to justify the rejection of Chandler. It published a statement contending that the decision to deny renomination to Chandler was motivated by neither Know Nothingism

⁶⁸ Oct. 5, 1854.

⁶⁹ *North American*, Sept. 19, 1854, On September 12, the *North American* had published a detailed description of a parade by a "secret order," identified as the "American Protestant Association." The slogans on banners and floats, as quoted by the *North American*, had more relevance to the ancient feuds of Belfast and Londonderry than to the issues of Philadelphia in 1854. The *North American* wryly noted: "Those who participated in the parade were a fine-looking set of men, with unmistakably Hibernian countenances."

⁷⁰ Holt, *Political Crisis*, 159; Coleman, *Pennsylvania Democracy*, 67.

⁷¹ *Cummings' Evening Bulletin*, Oct. 7, 1854.

⁷² James Campbell to James Buchanan, June 12, 1854, Buchanan Papers. On state Democratic strategy to counter Know Nothingism, see Gienapp, "Nebraska, Nativism, and Rum," 447-48.

nor religious considerations but by substantive issues of policy. The issues that constituted the gravamen of the committee's case against Chandler were three: his defense of the Democratic journalist and Clerk of the House of Representatives, John W. Forney, in a congressional inquiry; his truckling to the Postmaster General, James Campbell, a Catholic and controversial political figure (a charge that carried with it an implication of connivance between co-religionists); and his failure to defend the economic interests of Philadelphia in the matter of the Collins Line. The committee's statement also included the assertion that Chandler had indicated to the previous Whig convention an intention not to seek renomination.⁷³

Chandler's response to the specific charges in the committee's statement was prompt and factual. He denied that he had made any defense of Forney. An effort had been made, Chandler said, to expel Forney from his post as Clerk without a hearing. "Mr. Forney and I were not socially or politically connected, and rarely met, but he was my constituent, and he was assailed, and I deemed it my duty . . . to ask that . . . he might be heard." Chandler pointed out that the expulsion resolution had received only eighteen votes and that other prominent Whigs and Free Soilers had joined in the vote against it.⁷⁴

The available evidence supports Chandler's view of the Forney affair. Forney, one of the outstanding political journalists of his era, a native of Lancaster who had come to Philadelphia to edit the Buchananite *Pennsylvanian*, had been charged with falsifying the record of the House by causing an alteration in the text of an act pertaining to a railroad project in Minnesota. An investigating committee reported in August 1854 that while the language of the act had indeed been altered, Forney and the other House employees implicated had no dishonest or fraudulent intent. The committee did not recommend punitive action against Forney, but, nonetheless, Rep. T. G. Hunt of Louisiana introduced a resolution calling for his immediate dismissal. Chandler was one of several speakers to oppose Hunt's resolution. "I do not rise to defend the Clerk of the House," he declared in disclaiming any political or personal friendship with

⁷³ *North American*, Oct. 6, 1854.

⁷⁴ Chandler's response is quoted from *North American*, Oct. 9, 1854.

the target of the resolution, but he went on to argue forcefully that simple justice demanded that the accused be given a chance to defend himself. Hunt's resolution was rejected, 154 to 18.⁷⁵

The allegation that he had "truckled" to James Campbell raised a particularly sensitive issue for Chandler. Campbell, a Philadelphia Democratic leader, had become one of the more controversial figures first in Pennsylvania and subsequently in national politics. His loyalty to the Democratic organization and his productive proselytizing among Irish immigrant voters earned him a place on the common pleas court of Philadelphia County in 1841. Ten years later he was a Democratic candidate for the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, the first Catholic ever to win a place on the party's slate in a state-wide election and the only loser on that year's Democratic state ticket. His religion and his immigrant power base (although Campbell himself was the native-born son of a native-born father) had been used to excite opposition to him in many normally Democratic areas. To soothe Catholic Democrats miffed at what many of them perceived as a palpable act of religious discrimination, Governor William Bigler appointed Campbell as his Attorney General, and after Franklin Pierce became president he moved to expunge any vestige of anti-Catholicism that might remain from his 1852 campaign (and at the same time to placate James Buchanan) by making Campbell his Postmaster General. Nativists were outraged by Campbell's successive appointments; many Democrats thought them unwise. The Whig committee sought to exploit Campbell's notoriety as a Catholic by linking him to Chandler, the recent convert to Catholicism. The very word chosen to express the link, "truckled," suggested neophyte Chandler meekly subordinating himself to Campbell, the arch-practitioner of disreputable Catholic politics. In his response Chandler distanced himself from Campbell. He denied any business or political connection with the Postmaster General, and pointed to the fact that he had opposed, on their merits, every legislative proposal emanating from Campbell's department.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ *Cong. Globe*, 33d Cong., 1st sess., 2093-96, 2101-3.

⁷⁶ John F. Coleman, "The Public Career of James Campbell," *PH* 29 (1962), 24-39; Holt, *Forging a Majority*, 101, 106-9, 144; Tabachnik, "Know Nothing Party," 246-49, concludes that Campbell's professional background, much derided during his campaign for the Supreme Court, equalled that of his opponent; Roy F. Nichols, *Franklin Pierce: Young Hickory of the Granite Hills* (Philadelphia, 1931), 249; *North American*, Oct. 9, 1854.

The committee's charge that Chandler had failed to defend the economic interests of Philadelphia in the matter of the Collins Line had in it an element of irony. Chandler's entire career—as editor, councilman, and congressman—had been characterized by a tenacious defense of the economic, and especially the commercial, interests of his city. For many years, moreover, he had protested that New York City was unduly favored by federal policy. The Collins Line question involved a mail subsidy that would enable the New York shipping company to continue to compete on the North Atlantic routes with the Cunard Line, operating under subsidy from the British government. In the House debate in July 1852, Chandler voiced strong support for the subsidy proposal in an address cited for its force and eloquence. In his reply to the Whig committee, Chandler explained that he had initially opposed the subsidy proposal and had given it his support only after petitions and memorials from the leading merchants of Philadelphia convinced him that it was a matter of national interest—to refuse support to the Collins Line was to consign the whole of the North Atlantic traffic to the British. Chandler also observed that the concern about the Collins Line matter was rather belated, since he had been returned to the House without serious question in 1852, subsequent to the congressional resolution of the issue.⁷⁷

It is difficult to resist Chandler's conclusion that the Whig committee's specific charges were rationalizations of an action taken on other grounds. "Those charges . . . are mere afterthoughts," Chandler declared, "to free the Convention from the heavy charge of proscription." Every American, he continued, has a duty to defend his constitutional rights. "I am standing on that defence, and no attempt to argue away or divert public attention from the assault will lessen the infamy of the attack. . . ." Chandler justified his independent candidacy in terms of "freeing the Whig party from the disgrace of prostitution to a secret cabal."⁷⁸

A quick response to Chandler's defense came in a letter signed "A Member of the Whig Convention." "The idea of *religious proscription* is absurd," the letter said. "It is used . . . as a hypocritical and

⁷⁷ *North American*, Oct. 9, 1854. *Cong. Globe*, 32nd Cong., 2nd sess., Appendix, 781-84.

⁷⁸ *North American*, Oct. 9, 1854.

deceitful makeshift to catch Catholic votes, and as a cover for Mr. Chandler's morbid desire for place." The action of the convention, the Whig correspondent contended, had been controlled by Chandler's pledge of two years before "not to be a candidate for Congress again." While his other denials would take time to refute, Chandler "knows that the proof of his pledge exists *at home* and can be produced in a few hours. He is, therefore, too wily to contradict *that fundamental fact*."⁷⁹ Chandler had indeed failed to rebut the allegation that he had pledged himself in 1852 not to seek renomination in 1854, but he quickly remedied that:

I know of no such pledge made at any time to the Convention. It may have been that friends for me, or that I myself, did state my expectations of withdrawing from Congress; but be this as it may, I submit that the introduction of the element which ruled the deliberations of the Convention, placed both my friends and myself at perfect liberty in this respect. I know well what is due to party organization, and I do solemnly aver that no solicitation of friends, no reasons of whatever nature, would have ever induced me to become a candidate, except the duty I feel paramount—to resent with all the power and influence at my command the attempt to fasten upon the Whig party and deceive its members into carrying out the behests of an unscrupulous organization which will not submit its principles to the open light of day.⁸⁰

Chandler was in the position of being required to prove a negative and relied on a carefully qualified statement of denial. His adversaries, however, never produced the proof that they had said "exists *at home* and can be produced in a few hours."

The Whig committee had not addressed the Nebraska question, an issue on which Chandler's record of opposition was clearer and stronger than Tyson's. One unsigned newspaper advertisement, published the day before the committee's statement and presumably emanating from the Chandler camp, suggested that a vote for Chandler was a vote against the expansion of slavery. "Learn from the last Presidential campaign," the advertisement concluded, "that you can hope for nothing when you cringe to the South."⁸¹

⁷⁹ *Cummings' Evening Bulletin*, Oct. 9, 1854.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Public Ledger*, Oct. 5, 1854.

Philadelphia political gossip from mid-August on had suggested the possibility that the Democrats might exploit the division in the Whig party by withdrawing Hamilton and throwing their support to Chandler. It was also reported that James Campbell and John W. Forney, uneasy allies in their mutual support of James Buchanan and, in this instance, agents of the Pierce Administration, were actively promoting such a deal.⁸² Campbell did, in fact, several times suggest to William Bigler, the Democratic candidate for governor, and his aides, that such an arrangement might strengthen Bigler's chances of re-election.⁸³ Campbell's opportunistic scheme was frustrated by Democratic factionalism. Hamilton, the Democratic nominee and an ally of George M. Dallas, Buchanan's archrival for control of the Pennsylvania Democratic party, apparently saw no advantage in sacrificing his candidacy to advance the interests of Buchananites in the Pierce Administration, whose Philadelphia associates had attempted to deny him the nomination in the first place, and heatedly denied all reports of his withdrawal.⁸⁴

"A Member of the Whig Convention" had predicted that Hamilton would outpoll Chandler by two-to-one and Tyson would defeat him by four-to-one. His prediction turned out to be understated.⁸⁵ The official returns gave Chandler 1,196 votes, to 3,500 for Hamilton, and 5,655 for Tyson. The Whig battle did bring out more voters. The total vote in the Second District in 1854 was 602 votes greater than in the previous off-year congressional election, 1850, and approximately at the level of the congressional vote in the presidential years of 1848 and 1852. The Democratic vote declined consistently from 3,874 in 1848, 3,718 in 1850, 3,556 in 1852, to 3,500 in 1854.

⁸² Daniel T. Jenks to James Buchanan, August 18, Sept. 22, Oct. 3, 1854, Buchanan Papers; *Sun*, Sept. 15, Oct. 5, 1854; *Catholic Herald*, Oct. 5, 1854; *Public Ledger*, Oct. 6, 1854; *Sunday Dispatch*, Oct. 8, 1854; *Cummings' Evening Bulletin*, Oct. 9, 1854.

⁸³ James Campbell to William Bigler, Sept. 16, 1854; James Campbell to [Bigler aide], n.d. [Sept. 1854]; James Campbell to [Bigler aide], Oct. 2, 1854, Bigler Papers.

⁸⁴ Daniel T. Jenks to James Buchanan, Oct. 3, 1854, Buchanan Papers; *Sunday Dispatch*, Oct. 1, 1854; *Public Ledger*, Oct. 9, 1854. For Dallas, Buchanan, and the Pierce Administration, see Bruce I. Ambacher, "George M. Dallas: Leader of the Family Party" (Ph. D. diss., Temple University, 1971), 501-26; George Belohavek, *George Mifflin Dallas: Jacksonian Patrician* (University Park, 1977), 138-46; and Nichols, *Franklin Pierce*, 220-22, 253-55, 281-82.

⁸⁵ *Cummings' Evening Bulletin*, Oct. 9, 1854.

The Whig/American vote in 1854 was 1,164 below the combined total for the separate Whig and American votes in 1852, 374 below the off-year of 1850, and 1,001 below the Whig-Native American fusion total in the presidential year of 1848. Although Chandler's votes were fairly evenly distributed over the wards of the Second District, his strongest showing (15.3 percent of the vote) came in Ward 5, a commercial area along the Delaware riverfront. The numbers suggest that most of his votes came from Whigs and that the ethnic composition of a ward did not determine the level of its support for Chandler.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ The following tables illustrate voting patterns and ethnicity in the Second Congressional District:

Table 1: Votes and Percentage Distribution by Year and Party 1848-1854

	1848		1850		1852		1854	
	v	%	v	%	v	%	v	%
Whig	# 6656	62.7	5910	60.6	6594	63.6	+ 5655	54.6
American			119	1.2	225	2.2		
Democratic	3874	36.5	3718	38.0	3556	34.3	3500	33.8
Ind Whig							1196	11.6
Total	10620*		9749		10375		10351	

Whig-Native American fusion

* Total includes 90 scattered votes

+ Combined Whig and American vote

Sources Based on vote reports in *North American* Oct. 12, 1848, Oct. 10 1850, Nov 6, 1852, Oct. 11, 1854

Table 2: Vote and Percentage Distribution, 1854, by Ward and Candidate

	Tyson(W/A)		Hamilton(D)		Chandler(IW)	
	v	%	v	%	v	%
Ward 5	688	50.7	462	34.0	208	15.3
Ward 6	1080	51.8	781	37.5	224	10.7
Ward 8	1034	51.9	713	35.8	246	12.3
Ward 9	1160	54.0	744	34.7	243	11.3
Ward 10	1692	61.1	800	28.9	275	9.9

Source Based on vote reports in the *North American* Oct. 11, 1854

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Non-black Adult Males, 1850, by Ward and Ethnicity

	Ward 5	Ward 6	Ward 8	Ward 9	Ward 10
Irish	20.1	20.2	27.9	24.9	34.6
German	8.8	15.2	3.5	5.0	4.1
Native white American	57.9	56.9	48.9	63.3	52.5
Other	13.1	7.8	8.6	6.8	8.9

Source Philadelphia Social History Project data on sex, age, and ethnicity, 1850, Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania "Irish" includes both Protestants and Catholics native to the area of the present Republic of Ireland and the present Northern Ireland, United Kingdom Ward configurations do not always coincide with PSHP grid pattern boundaries, and, hence, my calculations should be treated as approximations

From his position as a part of a confident majority, Chandler had suddenly found himself, or certainly so he thought, one of an abused minority. Running for Congress as a Catholic was, he learned, quite a different experience from running as a Protestant. The nice distinctions drawn by some of his nativist friends between religious belief and national origin did not appear to prevail in either the Whig convention or "The Whig Gibraltar"; neither his impeccable Yankee ancestry nor his Whig orthodoxy atoned for his religious deviation.

Linking Chandler to the controversial Orestes A. Brownson, the *Sun* pointed the lesson of the recent campaign: "Orestes A. Brownson, an Apostate from Protestantism to Romanism, has received an apostolic benediction from Pius IX, and Joseph R. Chandler, another convert from the faith of his fathers to the errors of the Papacy, travelled to Rome last year to receive the same benediction. On Tuesday, the freemen of a portion of America, gave the latter a political hint, that he cannot serve two masters—Republican liberty and hierarchical tyranny."⁸⁷

Returning to Washington for the lame-duck session of the 34th Congress, Chandler found himself thrust into national prominence by his address defending American Catholics against Know Nothing charges of political subserviency to the Pope.⁸⁸ His colleagues in Philadelphia continued their determined battle for control of the Whig party, as the city prepared for its spring municipal elections. The same coalition of Know Nothings and Whigs that had dominated the conventions of 1854 moved to continue its control in the "Whig Convention" of March 1855, by again using Know Nothings acting as Whigs to elect delegates. A "pure" Whig delegate, Jeremiah Nichols, moved resolutions that would deny nomination to any person " . . . known to be a member of the anti-American combination known as Know-Nothings." Nichols's resolutions were tabled by a resounding fifty to twenty-two vote. The minority, twenty-two "pure" Whigs opposed to the proscriptive Know Nothings, then bolted to assemble a convention of their own.⁸⁹

When the "pure" Whigs met in their "Independent Whig Con-

⁸⁷ *Sun*, Oct. 12, 1854.

⁸⁸ Gerrity, "Temporal Power of the Pope," 107-17.

⁸⁹ Mueller, *Whig Party*, 220; *Sunday Dispatch*, March 25, 1855.

vention," they passed resolutions denouncing the Know Nothing-controlled "Whig Convention" and, after some delay, nominated candidates. "Pure" Whig leaders, however, increasingly looked toward a coalition of "good Whigs and honest Democrats" in support of a fusion ticket. The results were indecisive. The "pure" or "old line" Whig candidate for City Treasurer, running with Democratic support, fell 372 votes short of election, while the Democratic candidate for City Commissioner, the recipient of "old line" Whig support, lost by an even narrower margin. While there were reports of abstentions by disgruntled Whigs and Democrats who could not bring themselves to vote for the other party's candidate on the coalition ticket, nonetheless, the landslide margin of the Know Nothing-Whig coalition in the 1854 election, when Mayor Conrad swept to victory, had undergone a dramatic shrinkage. Since that election, the *Sunday Dispatch* calculated, the Know Nothing-Whig coalition had lost 6,500 votes, ". . . who may hereafter go over to the other parties and give them a majority. In this event, the Democrats stand the best chance of success. The Whig party is totally disorganized. Its name is used by the Know-Nothings as a trap to catch voters with whom *names* are *things*; but the vitality, independence, and spirit of that party are gone." The fall elections, it was predicted, would narrow to a contest between "Americans" (as the Know Nothing-Whig coalition labelled itself) and Democrats; in such a contest, with "pure" Whigs an insignificant factor, the "Americans" would be hard pressed to hold their own.⁹⁰

The "old line" Whigs (as the "pure" Whigs were now usually called) were sufficiently vigilant in policing the election of delegates to the fall convention to minimize Know Nothing penetration and encourage speculation about "harmonious fusion" with the Democrats. But a rival group, reportedly made up almost completely of Know Nothings, assembled its own convention, appropriated the "Old Line Whig" label, and read out of the Whig party all those who favored fusion with the Democrats. The former "old line" Whigs hastily renamed themselves "Regular Whigs" and sought cooperation with the Democrats (without which they had no chance of success), while

⁹⁰ *North American*, March 26, 1855; *Sunday Dispatch*, May 6, 1855.

the new "Old Line Whigs" endorsed an "American" ticket composed almost completely of Know Nothings. With the votes of many displaced and discontented Whigs (many of whom were reportedly alienated by the Know Nothing legislature's passage of a "jug law," prohibiting the sale of liquor-by-the-drink), the Democrats carried the city and county. The new Republican party won only token support.⁹¹

In Philadelphia the "Regular Whigs" survived the fall elections, without achieving a formal fusion with the Democrats, but in the state as a whole the effort to unify the opposition to the Democrats had reduced the Whig party to irrelevancy; only one Whig, a holdover senator, remained in the state legislature after the October elections.⁹²

The first months of 1856 saw the last gasp of the Philadelphia Whig party. Americans and Democrats (and, eventually, Republicans) competed for the support of the remaining "Regular Whigs." Some had already aligned themselves. The presidential candidacy of Millard Fillmore had brought Joseph R. Ingersoll, former congressman from the Second District, to the side of the Americans; Charles Gilpin, the former Whig mayor, was a featured speaker at Democratic meetings; and William B. Reed, Whig District Attorney, committed himself to the support of the Democracy. But a small band of die-hard Whigs resisted surrender, held a series of convention sessions in March and April 1856, nominated candidates and, failing to negotiate fusion with the Democrats or to find broad popular support, finally withdrew them. On April 24 the "Regular Whigs" dissolved their organization, ending the existence of the party that had dominated Philadelphia politics for more than two decades. Most of these refractory "Regular Whigs" turned to the Democrats, and their support helped bring victory to the eminently respectable candidate for mayor, Richard Vaux, and his Democratic running mates in the May municipal elections. In October 1856, James Buchanan carried the city, but even then the legendary "Whig Gibraltar," the Second District, bucked the Democratic tide and returned to Congress a "Union" candidate—Whig-American-Republican.⁹³

⁹¹ *Sunday Dispatch*, Aug. 12, 26, Sept. 9, 30, Oct. 14, 1855; Coleman, *Pennsylvania Democracy*, 77; Mueller, *Whig Party*, 225n.

⁹² Mueller, *Whig Party*, 223-24.

⁹³ Russell F. Weigley, "The Border City in Civil War, 1854-1865," in Weigley, ed., *Philadelphia*, 370-71; Mueller, *Whig Party*, 225; "Edward Joy Morris," *DAB* (New York, 1934), 13:206.

Chandler had played no conspicuous role in the Whig maneuvering prior to the municipal elections of 1855. By September, however, he was publicly identified as a supporter of the Democratic fight against proscription,⁹⁴ and a few months later he would endorse Buchanan's presidential candidacy.⁹⁵ Although he remained a Democrat until his death in 1880, Chandler would not again seek major elective office. His last important public post was as President Buchanan's Minister-Resident to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.⁹⁶

The Chandler episode, the focus of Whig party conflict and the prelude to the disintegration of the Philadelphia Whigocracy, is undoubtedly unique. While the Whig party included a number of prominent Catholics, it was rare for a Catholic to fill a major post in a northern Whig constituency. It was even more unusual to have a recent convert to Catholicism seek to retain a leadership role in the party. Yet, unique as it was, the Chandler episode offers a virtually unparalleled opportunity to test the relative influence of the issues of anti-Catholicism and antislavery in the Pennsylvania elections of 1854 and, a bit less directly, on the disintegration of the Philadelphia Whig party.

Chandler was clearly on record as an opponent of, indeed as a leader of opposition to, the Kansas-Nebraska Act.⁹⁷ His Whig-Know Nothing adversaries and their editorial allies, in the several charges levelled against him, never alluded to the Nebraska issue, never suggested that his position on slavery was in any way questionable or that Gossler's or Tyson's stand on slavery extension was, for any reason, more acceptable than his. Within the Philadelphia Whig party, antislavery was not the touchstone issue of the congressional election of 1854.

The Forney matter, the Campbell innuendo, the Collins Line

⁹⁴ John W. Forney, *Address on Religious Intolerance and Political Proscription. Delivered at Lancaster, Pa., on the Evening of the 24th of September* (Washington, 1855), 49.

⁹⁵ *Catholic Herald*, Feb.-May, 1856, passim. On Chandler's editorship of the *Catholic Herald*, see Frank Gerrity, "Joseph R. Chandler and 'The Catholic Herald': A Note," *RACHS* 93 (1982), 103-6.

⁹⁶ *Times*, July 12, 1880; Frank Gerrity and Anne M. Gerrity, "The Joseph R. Chandler-Henry C. Carey Correspondence: Five Letters from Naples, 1858-1859," *RACHS* 92 (1981), 96.

⁹⁷ *North American*, Aug. 15, 1854; *Sun*, Sept. 25, 1854.

affair—all convey the impression, as Chandler suggested, of an after-the-fact effort to adorn with elements of substantive plausibility a decision taken for quite other reasons. Foreign birth or immigrant associations, charges sometimes used to camouflage discrimination based on religion, could not be alleged against Chandler, a descendant of a family established for generations in the neighborhood of Plymouth Rock. The weight of the evidence strongly supports the conclusion that Joseph R. Chandler was rejected by the Whig convention primarily, if not exclusively, because he had joined the Catholic church. Similarly, the evidence supports the conclusion that the Philadelphia Whig party split, and remained split, primarily on the issue of “proscription,” with Chandler’s rejection as the crowning instance of this Know Nothing policy. Nowhere else in Pennsylvania were the Whigs confronted with so clear and uncluttered a choice of issues; they chose anti-Catholicism.

The Chandler episode provides dramatic support on the local level, in the state’s most important center of Whig strength, for the thesis ingeniously elaborated in the recent statistical studies of William E. Gienapp, that the Pennsylvania Whig party was shattered not by the issue of Nebraska and slavery extension but by the disruptive force of Know Nothingism and, specifically, anti-Catholicism.⁹⁸

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⁹⁸ Gienapp, “Nebraska, Nativism, and Rum,” *passim* (for a summary statement, see 469). Mueller, *Whig Party*, 239; and Coleman, *Pennsylvania Democracy*, 77, also attribute the Whig collapse in 1854 to the impact of Know Nothingism.