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Our Duty, Our Rights, Our America: Women in American Nativism 1830 - 1930

Tanis Lovercheck-Saunders

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OUR DUTY, OUR RIGHTS, OUR AMERICA: WOMEN IN AMERICAN NATIVISM 1830-1930

by

Tanis Lovercheck-Saunders

A Doctoral Paper

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

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University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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Grand Forks, North Dakota
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This doctoral paper, submitted by Tanis Lovercheck-Saunders in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Arts from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

(Chairperson)

This doctoral paper meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

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ABSTRACT

This paper assesses the role women played in organizing and maintaining anti-Catholic nativist movements between 1830-1930. It analyzes women's motivations for joining nativist sororities and describes the activities they participated in. It pays special attention to women involved in antebellum nativist sororities, late nineteenth century nativist sororities, and the Women of the Ku Klux Klan. It looks at how nativist women used the concepts of Republican Motherhood, woman's moral superiority, and woman's innate patriotism to justify their activities and campaign for woman suffrage.
INTRODUCTION

John Higham, America’s premier scholar of nativism, defines nativism as “intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign (i.e., ‘un-American’) connections.” Nativism has been part of American society since the arrival of the Puritans. Between 1830 and 1930, organized American nativism and militant anti-Catholicism were nearly synonymous. In that time period, anti-Catholic nativists launched three mass social movements.

The first movement wreaked havoc on America’s already faltering political party system. Beginning in the 1830s, anti-Catholic nativists joined together to protect their interests in the midst of the social and economic transformations besetting antebellum America. They formed the short-lived Native American Party to pursue their goals politically. In the 1840s and 1850s nativist ranks swelled as mass immigration intensified social and economic crises. In 1854 they formed the American or Know-Nothing Party. By 1855 the American Party seemed poised to replace the Whigs in America’s two-party system. But, like most American institutions, the American Party was torn apart by sectional controversy.

The second organized outburst of American nativism accompanied the rapid industrialization of the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. Once again, nativists blamed Catholic immigrants for the dislocation afflicting their own lives and united their energies to fight the “Catholic menace.” This time they chose to work within
the existing two-party system rather than form their own political party. Although they did not recruit as many members as their antebellum predecessors, postbellum nativists had a greater impact on state and federal legislation because much of the country was in a nativist mood. Moreover, nativists often couched their agenda in Progressive terms—a ploy that worked well in late nineteenth century America. Despite their progressive rhetoric, late nineteenth century nativists succeeded in making many miserable peoples’ lives more miserable.

The third outburst of organized anti-Catholic nativism occurred in the 1920s. It led to the creation of the largest right-wing extremist movement in American history—the Second Klan. The Second Klan recruited those who felt threatened by rapid urbanization and commercialization. Unlike their predecessors, these anti-Catholic nativists enjoyed their greatest successes in rural, small-town America. The Second Klan professed to be America’s conscience. It gained the support of millions of “traditionalists” uncomfortable with new standards of morality. The moral leaders’ use of violence to achieve their ends gave them a credibility problem. After five years of unparalleled influence the Second Klan came to an ignoble end.

Organized nativists did not create the social, economic, and political crises of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They were not alone in fearing for the future of the Republic; they were not alone in resenting the immigrants who seemed to bring down wages; and they were not the only Americans who experienced anxiety as the country

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became more pluralistic. Most Americans, however, were not willing to subvert
democratic norms to deal with these crises. The nativists were willing to do just that.

There have been several attempts to analyze the mind of a nativist. The two most
convincing, David Bennett’s *The Party of Fear: From Nativist Movements to the New
Right in American History* and Michael W. Hughey’s article “Americanism and Its
Discontents: Protestantism, Nativism, and Political Heresy in America” trace the nativist
mindset to the Puritans. The Puritans, according to these authors, established a
“community of saints” in the new Promised Land. They believed that by creating a
“voluntary association of qualified saints” they could fulfill God’s will on Earth and
usher in the Millennium. The model voluntary association—be it Puritan, colonial, or
early American—had the right to reject those who refused to follow God’s laws. Thus,
the privileges of democratic citizenship were extended only to those who were deemed
qualified to exercise them. Catholics, according to those fresh from Reformation
England, were decidedly unqualified for democratic citizenship. Colonial and early
national conflicts with Catholic Spain and France reinforced this notion.

The Puritans viewed themselves as the Elect. Their American descendants—
Puritan or not, nativist or not—continued to view themselves as a chosen people. They
viewed America as a New Eden that would usher in a new age in human history,
provided its citizens upheld essential Republican ideals. The Second Great Awakening

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2 David Bennett, *The Party of Fear: From Nativist Movements to the New Right in American
3 Michael W. Hughey, “Americanism and Its Discontents: Protestantism, Nativism, and Political
5 Ibid, 534.
and the evangelical movements it spawned reinforced the notion that America, the
Protestant Republic, would be the instrument of world redemption. Even as unsectarian
an individual as Abraham Lincoln believed America to be the “last, best hope on earth.”

Nativists, like other Americans, celebrated America’s special destiny. And, like
other Americans, they embraced what has been referred to as the “American Dream” of
economic self-sufficiency and individual freedom. Where nativists diverged from the
majority of the population was in their belief that their personal inability to live the
American Dream must be the result of some sinister (historically Catholic) conspiracy to
deny the Elect the just desserts of their Election. David Bennett feels sympathy for
nativists whom he sees as victims of a society that praises economic affluence, insists that
all true Americans can attain it, and morally condemns those who fail to do so.

Bennett and Hughey explain that nativists viewed America as a fragile paradise.
They believed that economic, political, and social change threatened America. Nativists,
most of whom were middle or artisan class evangelical Protestants experiencing
downward social mobility, resolved to defend the New Eden. They promised to preserve
its promise for future generations. They celebrated their own moral righteousness and
willingness to restore a freedom-filled prosperous American paradise. One of their “most
striking features,” according to Bennett, was “their personal identification with the
nation. They were special and superior because they were part of the great nation; if its
perfection was tarnished, their lives would be diminished.”

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6 Bennett, 8.
American nativists—as opposed to super patriots in groups such as the Daughters of the American Revolution—were extremists. They merit this label because they were willing to tamper with democratic procedures to achieve their ends. Many nativist organizations, for example, wanted to proscribe Catholics from voting and holding office, working in the military, and teaching in the public schools.

Women and Nativism

Women as well as men identified with and participated in nativist organizations. Industrialization and rapid urbanization raised fears of immobile class stratification that women, especially those of the lower middle and artisan classes, found disturbing. With very few exceptions, however, historians have ignored the role women played in nineteenth and early twentieth century nativism. Higham’s *Strangers in the Land*, the pathbreaking work that made nativism a distinct field of study, rarely refers to women in the nativist movement. Bennett’s *The Party of Fear*, an influential and delightfully readable comprehensive study of nativism, likewise slights women’s involvement in organized nativism. Indeed, when specifically asked to comment on the subject, Bennett dismissed the possibility that women had a role in the organized nativist movement outside of providing fodder for convent tales and serving as objects in need of true American defenders.\(^7\) Dale T. Knobel’s “*America for the Americans*”: The Nativist

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Movement in the United States offers a fresh perspective on the Anti-Catholic basis of nativism but still pays scant attention to women's involvement in nativist groups. Scholars focusing on the antebellum nativist movement have also ignored women. Ray Allen Billington's The Protestant Crusade 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism an outdated but still useful study, refers to women's organizations but they do not form an important part of his narrative. Tyler Anbinder's in-depth analysis of the Northern Know-Nothings, Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know-Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s, includes some useful footnotes but does not concern itself with women's activities. The premier state studies, Jean Baker's Ambivalent Americans: The Know-Nothing Party in Maryland and John Mulkern's The Know-Nothing Party in Massachusetts: The Rise and Fall of a People's Movement likewise ignore women's contributions to the nativist movement. Indeed, Baker goes so far as to state that the "sexuality of the political preserve" precluded women from having a role in the nativist movement. This statement seems especially ironic coming from Baker because Anna Ella Carroll, one of the most well known female nativists, lived and wrote in Maryland. Carroll's biographer, Janet Coryell, has studied the nativist phase of the flamboyant Marylander's career. In her article "Duty with Delicacy: Anna Ella Carroll of

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Maryland," Coryell concludes that, even if others did not, Anna Ella Carroll certainly took herself seriously and had an impact on political affairs as a regionally well-known political critic. Jean Gould Hale’s "Co-laborers in the Cause: Women in the Antebellum Nativist Movement" looks at Carroll’s career as well as the activities of the Daughters of Liberty and other nativist sororities. It is the most comprehensive and thoughtful account of women in antebellum nativism.

Scholars of late nineteenth century nativism have focused almost exclusively on the history of the American Protective Association (APA). For years the only monograph available was Humphrey Desmond’s *The APA Movement: A Sketch*. Desmond spends very little time discussing the APA’s auxiliary, the Women’s American Protective Association. Donald Kinzer authored the most comprehensive history of the APA, *An Episode of Anti-Catholicism: The American Protective Association*. Like Desmond, Kinzer barely mentions the organization that shared meeting space with and the agenda of the APA.

There is not a piece of research comparable to Jean Gould Hales’ for the period of 1880-1900. The few articles that do pay close attention to late nineteenth century nativist women focus on the role they played in the Massachusetts public school crises of the 1880s and 1890s. The most useful of these works include Lois Merk’s “Boston’s

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12 Baker, 70.
Historic Public School Crisis,"\textsuperscript{18} and Lawrence Kennedy’s “Pupils and Politics: Anti-Catholicism in Boston in the 1880s and 1890s.”\textsuperscript{19}

Scholars of early twentieth century nativism have focused on the rise and fall of the Second Klan. Although the Second Klan had both men’s and women’s organizations, scholars have paid scant attention to women in the Klan. The two most comprehensive studies of Klan history, David Chalmers’ \textit{Hooded Americanism}\textsuperscript{20} and Wyn Craig Wade’s \textit{The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America}\textsuperscript{21} dismiss the Women of the Ku Klux Klan (WKKK) as an irrelevant auxiliary. Charles Alexander’s \textit{The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest}\textsuperscript{22} (University of Kentucky Press, 1965) and Kenneth Jackson’s \textit{The Ku Klux Klan in the City 1915-1930}\textsuperscript{23} give more credit to the WKKK but still pay little attention to the history of the organization. Fortunately for those interested in the topic, Kathleen Blee wrote an acclaimed history of the WKKK in Indiana, \textit{Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s}.\textsuperscript{24}

As Coryell, Hales, and Blee have demonstrated, women played an important role in organizing and maintaining nativist organizations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Antebellum women joined nativist sororities that shared their anti-

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{17} Donald Kinzer, \textit{An Episode in Anti-Catholicism: The American Protective Association} (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964).
\textsuperscript{19} Lawrence Kennedy, “Pupils and Politics: Anti-Catholicism in Boston in the 1880s and 1890s,” \textit{Historical Journal of Massachusetts} 28 (2000): 56-75.
\textsuperscript{22} Charles Alexander, \textit{The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest} (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).
\textsuperscript{23} Kenneth Jackson, \textit{The Ku Klux Klan in the City 1915-1930} (Oxford University Press, 1967).
\textsuperscript{24} Kathleen Blee, \textit{Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s} (Berkley: University of California Press, 1991.)
\end{flushleft}
Catholic attitudes, promised to protect their economic interests, and vowed to promote temperance, public schools, and women's rights. Their postbellum sisters, worried that immigrant labor and a rising Catholic middle class threatened their social position, joined similar organizations for similar reasons. Women who joined the Second Klan shared the anti-Catholic attitudes and status anxieties of their nineteenth century predecessors but combined anti-papism with virulent White Supremacy. Despite the Ku Klux Klan's well-earned misogynistic reputation, nativist women who joined the Klan continued to support a progressive (white) women's rights agenda.

Nativist women of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries associated with nativist fraternities known for their conservative ideals and traditional view of women's position vis à vis men. Scholars have assumed that nativist women passively embraced the ideals of their male associates. A careful review of nativist women's pamphlets, periodicals, and organizational archives reveals, however, that while nativist women may have used the same rhetoric as their colleagues, they infused that rhetoric with unconventional meaning. Nativist women embraced the concepts of Republican Motherhood and women's moral authority, then used them to justify their actions and expand their influence. Later they fought for suffrage rights so that they could play a more active role in protecting the nation. Once they obtained the right to vote, nativist women vowed to use it to protect America from un-American peoples and ideas. Their blend of progressivism and intolerance had a significant impact on American history.
CHAPTER I
DOING OUR DUTY:
NATIVIST WOMEN IN ANTEBELLUM AMERICA

The Historical Setting

In 1834 a mob led by Protestant brickmakers and truckmen sacked and burned an Ursuline Convent in Boston. Ten years later, a riotous mob destroyed over thirty homes and tenements as well as two Catholic churches in Philadelphia. Nearly thirty people died in the Philadelphia Riots of 1844. The anti-Catholic violence undermined support for the Native American Party, a fledgling organization that sympathized with the rioters’ ends if not necessarily their means.¹

The rioters and their sympathizers had been tantalized by sado-masochistic convent tales, scandalized by Catholic Bishop John Hughes’ demands for a portion of public school funds for parochial schools, and radicalized when their state legislatures agreed to several of Hughes’ demands. They were living in a time of social and economic upheaval complicated by political crisis. In many ways they were not all that different from their contemporaries. They shared the anti-Catholic bigotry and racism expressed by many other Americans. They also shared the belief that America was a promised land with a special national mission. Like many antebellum Americans they

participated in the religious revival and reform movements that promised to perfect the New Eden.

And, like many antebellum Americans, Native American Party members feared sectional controversy and what effect it might have on America's Manifest Destiny. They differed from the mainstream primarily in who they blamed for America's problems: alien intruders from across the sea.² Although the fortunes of the Native American Party waned after 1844, nativism continued to smolder in many American cities. Increased immigration and intensified social, economic, and political crises led to a resurgence of anti-immigrant feelings in the late 1840s and early 1850s. Several new nativist fraternities and sororities organized to "protect" America. The most significant of these organizations was the secrecy-obsessed Order of the Star Spangled Banner (OSSB) which later became the Know-Nothing or American Party.³

The Know-Nothing Party burst on the scene in 1854. Members of the OSSB, other nativists, and refugee Whigs helped make the American Party one of the most successful nativist organizations in American history. The American Party enjoyed broad support, especially in the border states (in a fit of wishful thinking, border state nativists blamed the Pope for the escalating sectional crisis). By the end of 1855 the party had elected eight governors, over 100 Congressmen, the mayors of Boston, Philadelphia, and

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³ Although they shared many partisans, the Native American Party and the American Party were different entities. The Native American Party was active in the 1840s. The American Party (the Know-Nothing Party) was active in the 1850s.
Chicago, and thousands of local officials. Representing a cross-section of urban Protestant America, the Know-Nothings vowed to “Save and exalt the Union” by “rescuing and restoring” American institutions and preserving native Americans’ birthright. They celebrated “Americanism” which they defined as “Mental light and personal independence, constitutional union, national supremacy, submission to law and rules of order, homogeneous population, and instinctive patriotism” which were all “vital elements of American liberty, nationality, and upward and onward progress.”

The Know-Nothings helped undermine the strength of the Whig Party. For a time they seemed poised to become one of the parties in America’s two-party system. But, while its members could agree on what constituted “Americanism” and who threatened the country (Irish Catholic Democrats), and while they did their best to ignore the sectional controversy by insisting that the real enemy was foreign influence, the American Party was destroyed by the sectional crisis. It nominated Millard Fillmore for President in 1856 on a platform that called for the maintenance of the union and recognition of states’ rights. The American Party did very well in the South, winning 40 percent of the popular vote and the electoral vote of Maryland. Nevertheless, intra-party divisions over the slavery controversy tore the American Party apart. Shortly after Fillmore’s defeat, the Northern Know-Nothings flocked to the Republican Party while Southerners became Democrats.

4 The most complete study of the rise of the northern Know-Nothings is Tyler Anbinder’s Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know-Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

5 William Gannaway Brownlow, Americanism Contrasted with Foreignism (Nashville, TN: Published for the Author) 1856. Library of American Civilization Ultrafische 159099.

6 Ibid, 9.
The Know-Nothings and other antebellum nativists mixed “illiberal passions and progressive impulses.” Most of the men and women who joined the nativist ranks were middle or artisan class Anglo-Saxons experiencing downward social mobility as a result of the economic and social changes in antebellum America. Most were evangelical Protestants who had little trouble believing that the Pope and his minions were responsible for their personal and America’s political troubles. They had few qualms about proscribing Catholics. At the same time, antebellum nativists supported many “progressive” reforms. Across the nation nativists embraced temperance and universal public education. In the North they worked for a ten-hour workday and opposed the expansion of slavery. The Massachusetts American Party, having seceded from the national organization, went so far as to make “Freedom” a part of its platform.

Nativists and Republican Motherhood

Thousands of American women were drawn to the nativist cocktail of anti-Catholic hysteria and progressive demands. With the exception of Jean Gould Hales, however, historians of the period have ignored this fact. Jean Baker, for example, writes that the “sexuality of the political preserve” kept women from having a voice in the nativist movement. Baker and others have either failed to uncover or have ignored the claims and activities of antebellum nativist women. They have focused on nativists’

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8 Ibid.
That judgment is inaccurate. Antebellum nativists embraced the ideal of Republican Motherhood. The image of the Republican Mother informed nativists’ perception of women’s duties and roles in the nativist movement. In her study of the “Republican Mother,” historian Linda Kerber writes that two phenomena proved important in the creation of the ideal of Republican Motherhood.\textsuperscript{11} The first was a “pervasive Lockean environmentalism” that held “that what people were was... dependent on how they were educated.”\textsuperscript{12} The second, reflecting the influence of the Roman historian Tacitus, was the widely held idea that the survival of a republic depended on the virtue of its citizens. It followed that “women had the power to direct the moral development of the male citizens of the republic. The influence women had on children, especially their sons, gave them ultimate responsibility for the future of the new nation.”\textsuperscript{13} Thus the Revolution “enlarged the significance of what women did in their homes.”\textsuperscript{14}

Nativist women and men espoused this ideology. Consequently, as so many historians have noted, nativists insisted that woman’s place is in the home. But what most historians of the time period have misunderstood is that this mantra could be empowering as well as stifling. Undoubtedly, conservatives (many of whom were nativists) used it to obstruct the incipient woman’s movement. But progressives (many of

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, 24.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, 59.
whom were nativists) used it to justify an expansion of women’s rights and activities. What conservative and progressive nativists could agree on is that women were responsible for inculcating morality and patriotism in the American people. Believing women to be innately virtuous, pious, and patriotic, male nativists did not balk when women insisted that they be part of the nativist movement. Indeed—because they viewed theirs as a moral and patriotic rather than purely political movement—male nativists viewed women as their “natural allies.” The American Woman, the premier nativist women’s journal of its time, expressed the beliefs of many female and male nativists:

A country is nothing without men; men are nothing without intellect and virtue. Woman is man’s highest stimulus; and it is her duty to prompt him in his onward career of self-development. She moulds his spirit in childhood, and stimulates to noble deeds, in the maturity of manhood. How much, therefore, does a nation’s destiny depend upon her influences, and how great is the responsibility devolving upon an American woman.15

Historian David Bennett suggests that the nativists offered women “their sanctified role as a sop for being denied access to opportunity in the competitive marketplace.”17 Perhaps he is right. Nevertheless, the nativists’ repetitive praise of Republican Motherhood and constant exhortations to women to restore public morality and protect Protestantism fell on willing ears. Nativist women, like Protestant women in much of America, responded to the call to rehabilitate society.18 Little did male nativists (or other evangelical Protestants for that matter) realize how far women would stretch

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14 Ibid., 38.
15 Hales, 138.
16 “Prospectus,” The American Woman (Philadelphia) 7 December 1844, 4. Original copies of The American Woman can be found at the Pennsylvania Historical Society.
18 Hales, 127.
their maternal authority. Many a female nativist broke out of her domestic cocoon to exert her moral influence in society. In the end nativism, a moral movement with a political expression, helped many women bridge the gap between their “sphere” and the wider world.

**Nativist Women Organize**

Nativist women’s associations appeared at a time when women across America were forming voluntary associations to achieve the goals that they felt were important. Female nativists should be seen as part of the cohort of female temperance advocates, benevolence workers, moral reformers, and abolitionists, who used voluntary associations “to evade some of the constraints and redefine ‘woman’s place’ giving it a public dimension.”¹⁹ Like their cohorts, nativist women moved into public space because there was “nearly a universal assumption that women were responsible for the community’s welfare.”²⁰ What makes the female nativist societies unique is that they were initially established as adjuncts to a political party—something quite unusual in the mid-nineteenth century.

The first female nativist associations were established as adjuncts to the Native American Party in Philadelphia in the 1840s. The early societies included the Female Native American Association, Native American Benevolent Association, and American Republican Benevolent Association.²¹ The societies attracted married middle class women and single working class women living in urban areas. Societies tended to cluster

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²⁰ Ibid, 21.
in industrial areas with large immigrant populations. Nativist women were especially active in Philadelphia, New York, New England, New Jersey, Maryland, and New Orleans. The most successful of the female nativist societies was the United Daughters of America (UDA), established in Philadelphia in 1845. By the 1850s the UDA boasted 38 councils in Pennsylvania, ten in New York City, four in New Jersey, two in Baltimore, and others scattered in Delaware, upstate New York, and Massachusetts.  

Anna Ella Carroll, the most prolific propagandist of the nativist movement, praised the women of the UDA as “professed helpers in leading the nation out of its moral obstructions into light and peace.” She hoped that “their yet unmeasured strength, and coming not unsought, but as humble co-workers for truth” would help secure “freedom, and . . . all the grandeur and glory of their country.”

The Patriotic Daughters of America (PDA), auxiliary to the influential United Sons of America, also enjoyed considerable success. In 1851 the PDA had seven chapters in Pennsylvania, two in Baltimore, one in New Jersey, and one in Massachusetts. The PDA’s political orientation was apparent from its inception. Upon organizing, the New Jersey PDA announced that “existing evils can only be reached through the ballot-box, affecting a change in our Naturalization laws. As our

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21 For more on the organization of the early female native associations see Jean Gould Hales, “Co-Laborers in the Cause.”
22 Hales, 120.
24 The United Sons of America joined with the OSSB to form the Know-Nothing or American Party.
25 Hales, 120.
revolutionary mothers assisted the patriots of '76 in conquering a foreign foe, so do these ladies."

A few women's nativist groups organized and flourished without male counterparts. The American Daughters of Liberty (ADL) was an independent organization in New York. Its constitution stated that:

The object of this Association shall be to disseminate American principles, by the distribution of tracts, descriptive of the early struggles of our forefathers, elucidating the principles of Government, offering moral information, and impressing on the youthful mind the value of our glorious and free institutions.  

The ADL encouraged women to join the movement because the issues being talked about in nativist circles affected women as well as men: "Let the American fair—the mothers, come and listen to that which equally concerns us all." News of the activities of the ADL, as well as other female nativist societies, appeared regularly in The American Woman, a nativist journal owned and operated by Harriet Probasco of Philadelphia.

The Know-Nothings did not establish a formal women's auxiliary. They did, however, maintain and support the existing female nativist societies and hired female publicists. The most interesting woman associated with the Know-Nothings was Anna Ella Carroll of Maryland. She wrote what is often described as the "textbook" of the Know-Nothing cause, The Great American Battle, as well as many other partisan texts. Her story, which will be related below, reveals a good deal about the role women played in antebellum nativism and the dual nature of the movement.

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26 "Patriotic Daughters of America," The American Banner (Camden, NJ) 13 April 1850, 3.
28 Ibid.
Motives and Activities

Why did women join nativist associations? Anti-Catholic bigotry certainly drew thousands of women into the nativist movement. Antebellum nativist women believed that the Catholic Church posed a serious threat to private and public morals and intended to overturn civil and religious liberties. They believed that the Pope planned to seize control of America and had masterminded the immigration of millions of Irish to American shores. Nativists feared that Catholic dupes—supposedly incapable of loyalty to their country—would destroy Protestantism and America’s democratic promise.

Women nativists found this prospect especially frightening because they believed that, thanks to their country’s pure Protestant heritage, American women enjoyed a higher status than women in any other part of the world. They feared losing that status if the “Catholic hordes” continued to immigrate to America. Women also feared for their virtue. They had been frightened (and more than likely morbidly intrigued) by the convent tales popular at the time. The most famous of those tales, Maria Monk’s *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal*, sold 300,000 copies and served as the *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* of the nativist movement. Monk and other “escaped nuns” scandalized their readers with tales of the sexual exploits of the Catholic clergy and the lime-covered bones of infants conceived in Catholic convents.

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31 Billington, 108. A copy of Monk’s *Awful Disclosures* can be found in the Library of American Civilization Ultraschne Collection, #13722.
Nativists blamed Catholic immigrants for rising crime rates and overburdened almshouses—and the increased taxes needed to combat both. William Brownlow, nativist author from Tennessee, bemoaned that "from this immigration springs nearly four-fifths of the beggary, two-thirds of the pauperism, and more than three-fifths of the crime in our country." Anna Ella Carroll expressed similar complaints, adding that crime had increased "one-hundred fold" because of Catholic immigrants. Antebellum nativists wanted to place a $250-$500 capitation tax on prospective immigrants to reverse this trend.

The nativists also wanted to change American naturalization laws so that an immigrant would have to live in America twenty-one years before being eligible to vote. They feared, however, that changes in immigration and naturalization law would be frustrated by political corruption. For, the nativists—many of whom were former Whigs uncomfortable with Jacksonian Democracy—believed that Irish Catholics had seized control of the Democratic party and were corrupting the political system. Brownlow bellowed that Democratic politicians were "willing to act the part of traitors to our laws and Constitution, for the sake of profitable offices; and they are willing to sacrifice the Protestant Religion on the ancient and profligate altar [sic] of Rome." Anna Ella Carroll scolded "money-loving, spoils-devouring, office-seeking politicians" for allowing foreigners to influence American policy. Carroll, and presumably many other nativist

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32 Brownlow, 121.
33 *Great American Battle*, 300.
35 Brownlow, 7.
36 *The Great American Battle*, 262.
women in the border states, feared that Irish Catholic influence in the Democratic Party lay behind the destabilizing sectional controversy.\textsuperscript{37}

Women joined the nativist movement out of economic self-interest. Given a choice, most nativists would have preferred for women to stay at home. They realized, however, that some women had no choice but to seek outside employment. “A mother cannot long sit in idleness when her babes are about her,” explained \textit{The American Banner}.\textsuperscript{38} The United Daughters of America (UDA) organized for the express purpose of protecting native female laborers. The UDA announced that:

\begin{quote}
The objects of this order are similar to those of the United American Mechanics. The depression of female labor, within the last few years, has given origin to an association of American women, the majority of whom rely upon their own exertions to maintain that position in society, which their many virtues fully entitle them to. Many find it difficult, with the scanty wages now meted out to their husbands, fathers and brothers, to clothe, feed and educate families that formerly enjoyed comparative opulence from the earnings of those whom God designed should be “their staff and shield;” and, with that characteristic spirit of the American woman, have resolved to share the toils of the sterner sex, and contribute their mite in maintaining the comforts of their families... The Tailoress, the Mantua-maker, the Shoe-binder, the Hat-trimmer, the Book-folder, and the Seamstress, have all been compelled to submit to a reduction of wages, consequent upon excess of numbers—hence they have banded together, like their foreign allies, in self-defense, with the hope of mitigating the wrongs which avarice has fastened upon helpless woman.\textsuperscript{39}
\end{quote}

Not surprisingly, UDA chapters clustered around urban areas with textile mills and other manufacturing establishments. Jean Gould Hales estimates that in some of these towns nativist women outnumbered nativist men.\textsuperscript{40}


\textsuperscript{38} “Grinding the Face of the Poor,” \textit{The American Banner} (Camden, NJ) 13 April 1850, 1.

\textsuperscript{39} “United Daughters of America,” \textit{The American Banner} (Camden, NJ) 13 April 1850, 3.

\textsuperscript{40} Hales, 122N.
Nativist women complained that foreign competition denigrated domestic work. Antebellum nativist women longed for the days when a farmer’s daughter could work as a domestic for a few years and still secure an upwardly mobile marriage. They resisted America’s increasingly rigid class stratification, a phenomenon that conflicted with their vision of freedom and economic opportunity. They regretted that:

The day has gone by when a high-minded American girl can make herself an associate and companion of the ‘foreign help’ that is knocking at every door for employment. They have brought the servile manners of the old world with them, and have thus rendered such a situation intolerable for an American girl. The time was when such employment was honorable . . . that day has gone by. Our politicians, their fathers, sons and brothers, have voted down the American woman, in their eagerness to befriend the foreigner.41

Even worse, economic competition forced many native working women into prostitution. The American Banner admonished: “Look to it Americans—when you deplore the starvation of your countrywomen on one hand, or scowl upon them as they pursue a life of shame, from necessity, on the other—bear in mind you voted for it.”42 The American Woman added its lament:

Low wages occasioned by the surplus female operatives, in our large cities, and want and self-abandonment as consequences, have opened the flood-gates of pollution, and drawn into the vortex of immorality many who once would have shuddered at the thought of even a trifling impropriety.43

The UDA, United Order of American Mechanics, and other nativist organizations offered palliatives to these problems. These societies resembled fledgling unions. They provided relief for unemployed members, helped members find employment, supported each other’s businesses, offered disability benefits, established a cemetery fund, and

41 “The Sorrows of the Needle,” The American Banner (Camden, NJ) 12 April 1851, 3.
42 Ibid.
provided relief to widows and orphans. Meanwhile, nativist journals defended labor, ran numerous stories depicting the plight of native female workers, encouraged their readers to employ American girls at fair prices, and called for a return to "Republican simplicity" when individuals were valued and life was fair. While they rejected the notion that women seek jobs previously reserved for men, nativist journals did accept ads from native women seeking work. The papers contended that placing a special tax on Catholic immigrants would deter them from coming to the country and thus protect the interests of American workers.

Many middle-class women became active nativists because, as The American Banner explained, "our cause is progressive." The nativists, especially those north of the Mason-Dixon line, advocated a number of reforms of interest to antebellum women. Those reforms ranged from rigid observation of the Sabbath and moral reform to temperance and even abolition. Native women's associations in New York City campaigned against juvenile crime and tried to protect female prison inmates. The American Woman embraced dress reform and advised its readers to get physical

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44 "O.U.A.M.," The American Banner (Camden, NJ) 21 February 1852, 2. See also Hales, 122-123.
45 See for example "The Sorrows of the Needle," The American Banner (Camden, NJ) 12 April 1851, 3. See also The American Woman (Philadelphia) 12 April 1845, 3. Harriet Probasco printed requests for employment by housekeepers and also advertised her own services as a printer with "the neatest style, the shortest notice, and the most reasonable terms."
46 See for example "A Tariff for Workingmen," The American Banner (Camden, NJ) 13 April 1850, 2.
47 "To the Native Americans of New Jersey and Pennsylvania," The American Banner (Camden, NJ) 13 April 1850, 2.
48 Hales, 130.
exercise. Harriet Probasco, its founder and editor, personally supported woman suffrage.

While the movement as a whole did not follow suit, the American Party in the North flirted with the women’s rights movement. In 1855 the nativist-dominated Massachusetts legislature passed laws enabling women to sue, transact business, make wills, keep their earnings, and go to work without the consent of their husbands. In addition, the Massachusetts legislature made divorce and remarriage easier for women while nativist judges imposed alimony on husbands and assigned custody of children to mothers. The nativist Massachusetts legislature mandated a ten-hour workday, limited child labor, dramatically increased school spending, and called for the racial desegregation of public schools. At the same time—reflecting the dual nature of the nativist movement—the Massachusetts legislature established committees to investigate convents and restrict immigration. This combination of progressivism and bigotry might seem unusual today, but to antebellum nativists it made perfect sense. They were certainly not the only nineteenth century reformers to decry the influx and influence of supposedly hard drinking, immoral Catholic immigrants.

Nativist journals and political tracts teem with condemnations of drunkenness—and the immigrants and their political allies who were allegedly responsible for widespread intemperance. Not coincidentally, temperance women joined the nativist movement in droves. The relationship between temperance and nativism demonstrates

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49 See for example, “Was it Providence?,” The American Woman (Philadelphia) 11 January 1845, 1.
50 For more on the actions of the Massachusetts Legislature see Mulkern, 111. See also Hales, 124.
the appeal of the latter to reform-minded women.\footnote{Hales, 130.} Harriet Probasco, for example, began her public career as a temperance leader in Philadelphia. Later, she brought many of her companions to the nativist fold. The female nativist associations maintained strict temperance policies—to the point that they blacklisted and denied relief benefits to intemperate members.\footnote{Ibid.} Temperance-nativist women encouraged other women to use their influence to spread temperance ideals. They advised single women to avoid any man who did not take a temperance pledge. They warned wives that, unless they acted, their husbands might become intemperate and destroy their families.\footnote{See for example, “The Horrors of Intemperance,” \textit{The American Woman} (Philadelphia) 12 April 1845, 4.}

Temperance-nativist women advocated political reform. For example, women in Philadelphia—indignant that voting took place in saloons—urged “our temperance friends, as a matter of the highest duty, to have this practice changed. If the fault be in the law, let us have the law altered at once.”\footnote{“Important to our Temperance Friends,” \textit{The American Woman} (Philadelphia) 12 April 1845, 2.} Temperance-nativist women also wanted to see changes in licensing laws. “The Court is again in session,” announced \textit{The American Woman}:

\begin{quote}
and we recommend our friends to be active in bringing the vendors of ardent spirits to justice. Let them not only see that the unlicensed seller be brought to punishment, but that measures be taken to prevent the granting of any more licenses ... The whole licensed system must be abolished. The law ... must no longer be allowed to lend its approving power to drunkenness.\footnote{“Temperance Movements,” \textit{The American Woman} (Philadelphia) 19 July 1845, 2.}
\end{quote}

Temperance-nativist women celebrated their role in reforming society’s laws. “Whilst men and women are disputing the point of women’s ability to act,” noted \textit{The American Woman}:
Woman, "the fact that in this mighty temperance movement, woman has been and is the mighty actor, stands out in the boldest relief before them. What a revolution!" 56

The public schools controversy probably brought more middle-class women to the nativist fold than anything else. Nativist women believed that public education was "the best guarantee for good citizenship." 57 Anna Ella Carroll called the common schools "the instrument of liberty, property, and security [in] America." 58 Nativists viewed public education as something of special concern to women since mothers and schools shared responsibility for raising moral Republicans. 59 The Catholic movement to take the Protestant Bible out of public schools and receive a portion of common school funds ignited fears that Catholics would gain control of the public schools and thus destroy America from within. Anna Ella Carroll warned mothers that their children's education was in danger of being "abridged, shaped, and murdered by Romish despots." 60 Carroll insisted that women had a duty to "cherish and uphold" public education and use of the Protestant Bible. 61 Moreover, according to Carroll, women could protect themselves by protecting the Protestant Bible, for without it women had "no hope." 62 Nativist women responded to the call to protect their children, their Bibles, and themselves.

Nativist women condemned Protestant Americans who sent their children to Catholic schools. Carroll warned that Popery would fulfill its awful mission through its "convents, schools, and colleges" and insisted that Americans must "educate our own

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56 "Temperance," The American Woman (Philadelphia) 11 January 1845, 2.
57 "Patriotic Daughters of America," The American Banner (Camden, NJ) 13 April 1850, 3.
58 The Great American Battle, 57.
60 Ibid, 134.
people in our own schools." She told mothers that Catholic offers to educate Protestant girls in convent schools proved that the "treacherous tyrants" intended to transform good Protestant girls into nuns. Carroll and other alarmists warned Americans that Catholic schools intended to spread sexual immorality throughout the United States.

The women who joined female nativist associations usually engaged in "gender appropriate" activities. They distributed patriotic tracts, encouraged benevolent activities, raised funds for the cause, boycotted goods made by immigrants, gave awards to the precincts with the highest nativist vote, and showed up at meetings resplendent in red, white, and blue. Male and female nativists joined together to celebrate patriotic holidays. In these and other activities, nativist women hoped to imbue their husbands and children with patriotism and a sense of self-sacrifice. "Banner" making was a favorite activity. On 19 July 1845, The American Woman described two "Banner" presentations. The "patriotic ladies of South Mulberry Ward" presented the first banner. J. Sanderson, of the male affiliate, accepted it, commenting:

I receive from you this flag from fair hands and bright eyes, from virtue and innocence, as an offering upon the altar of patriotism, in the spirit of Liberty, and dedicated to the cause of truth. Of the benign influence of the labors of woman upon the destinies of our race, the day and circumstances which have called together this wide spread assembly of our patriotic friends will permit but a partial

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62 Ibid.
63 Ibid, 65.
65 Billington, 86.
66 Hales, 133.
67 See for example "To the Benevolent," *The American Woman* (Philadelphia) 11 January 1845, 2. See also Hales, 125-133.
69 Hales, 133.
glance... Oh sons of patriots! Oh fear not, the mothers and daughters are with you, victory is sure, for 'the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.'

Meanwhile the Native American Ladies of New Orleans presented a banner to the Native American Artillerists. This time a woman, Mrs. Thomas Winston, made the presentation, exhorting:

Sons of our Native soil—descendants of Revolutionary Mothers! should a foreign foe dare to plant his foot on the soil that gave you birth—should he again threaten to march his armies upon our beautiful city, will not your souls burn to meet the invader, and as you spread this Banner to the breeze, here in the name of the Ladies of New Orleans. I give a pledge for you on the altar of your country, that beneath its glorious folds, you will, to the last drop of your heart's blood, protect the... Crescent City, from the sacrilegious touch of any foreign foe. The pledge is given—do you not to a man, my countrymen, ratify and confirm it? You do—you do! This Banner is confided to you by the Ladies of New Orleans, and they have an abiding confidence, that in your hands it will never be disgraced.

Nativist women participated in rallies and parades. They also sponsored mass meetings that raised an occasional eyebrow. To stifle criticism from their opponents, nativist women often asked a male colleague to officiate or deliver the main address at a meeting. Still, many nativist women spoke for themselves in front of mixed audiences.

Occasionally, nativist women engaged in activities that challenged prevailing gender norms. During the bloody Philadelphia riots of 1844, women brought weapons to men and were, according to the commander of the militia charged with stopping the riots, "our greatest foes." Seven years later 3,000 women in Philadelphia signed a petition asking the state legislature to allocate at least $5,000 to "our poor American
seamstresses."73 Many more signed petitions urging their legislatures to reject Catholic demands for a share of public school funds.74 Perhaps most interesting, at its first national convention in 1844 the Native American Party reserved a section of seats for women who wanted to observe the proceedings.75 Thereafter, women were encouraged to attend local affiliate meetings. On 13 April 1850, *The American Banner*, a nativist journal published in Camden, New Jersey, announced two upcoming Native American Party meetings. The first, to be held in Greenland, observed that “The fact that the Ladies of Greenland constitute a large portion of the audience, is sufficient to guarantee a large meeting.” The second, to be held in Medford, simply noted that “The Ladies are respectfully invited to attend.”

Antebellum nativists insisted that they were patriots fighting a new Revolutionary War that could only be won by reviving patriotism. In addition to the Republican Mother, they used the historic model of the Revolutionary woman to define women’s role in the movement. Horace Galpen, a leader of the American Party, wrote in the preface to Anna Ella Carroll’s *The Great American Battle*:

> Would that there were a thousand such talented female pens, glowing with emotions of love and devotion to their country, and throwing their burning eloquence over the hearts of fathers and mothers, the sons and the daughters, to awaken the slumbering energies, and to revive the exalted emotions of native, primitive patriotism.76

Stories and poems about Revolutionary women fill the pages of nativist journals. While many such odes celebrate Revolutionary women’s “selfless devotion” to the cause

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74 Hales, 129.
75 Bid, 136.
76 *The Great American Battle*, x.
and procreation of Revolutionary heroes, others focus on their active participation in the Revolution. Anna Ella Carroll praised "the daring and danger of espionage" which "was the painful mission of woman" during the Revolutionary War. Harriet Probasco related the story of Emily Geiger who allegedly delivered a message across enemy lines because "General Green could find no man... bold enough to undertake so dangerous a mission." Less dramatic accounts recall how Revolutionary women raised money for the continental army, boycotted British goods, nursed the wounded, and managed farms/business during the war. In celebrating the formation of the Patriotic Daughters of America auxiliary, *The American Banner* gushed: "As our revolutionary mothers assisted the patriots of '76 in conquering a foreign foe, so do these ladies encourage and aid the sons of the soil, in protecting their social and political rights."

The nativists' belief that they were in the midst of a new Revolutionary struggle and that the women should follow in their Revolutionary grandmother's footsteps had unforeseen consequences. It sometimes became difficult for nativists to distinguish between acceptable patriotic work and "unladylike" partisan political activity. Certainly, the activist model of 1776 had little to do with mid-nineteenth century concepts of passive femininity. Although their male colleagues may have been unable to decide whom they preferred--the Revolutionary woman or her more sedentary

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78 *The Great American Battle*, 259.
80 Hales, 132.
82 Hales, 132-133.
granddaughter—women like Harriet Probasco and Anna Ella Carroll eagerly embraced the Revolutionary model.

**Case Study—Progressive Nativism: Harriet Probasco and *The American Woman***

Harriet Probasco of Philadelphia was one of the most important antebellum nativists. She founded the Patriotic Daughters of America, one of the largest and most politically active female nativist groups. She also published a journal, *The American Woman*, that openly discussed public affairs and partisan politics. Probasco often used the image of the Republican Mother to defend her views and her paper. In *The American Woman*’s inaugural issue Probasco advised her potential detractors:

> There are those in the community, who may think it strange that a paper should be issued in the city of Philadelphia, *to be printed, published and edited by Ladies*. To all such we would merely say, that upon American Woman depends, no less than on the men, the perpetuity [sic] of our beloved institutions . . . We design our paper to be the medium through which American women can have communication with the world. To the American women we appeal for its support . . . It is their gentle influence shed forth in wisdom, modesty and purity, that we seek to reflect upon the community of which we are members, and through that upon the whole country and upon the world. The influence of woman, in human affairs has always been of controlling importance. All history is full of that one great lesson.—How important, therefore, that woman herself should be awakened to the fact, and be prepared to exert an influence of a proper character.83

*The American Woman* endorsed temperance and the Native American Party. It encouraged women to operate newspapers, circulate petitions, learn about history, and speak in public on issues such as temperance, peace, and nativism.84 To those who felt “scandalized” by women commenting on public affairs, Probasco responded, “Woman

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83 "Prospectus," *The American Woman* (Philadelphia) 7 December 1844, 4. This “Prospectus” appears in each issue of *The American Woman*.
84 Hales, 131.
must be an equal co-laborer with man, in the work of regenerating his fallen soul." One of her contributors, “Catharine,” added:

There are in existence some who loudly and strangely maintain the leveling system... that women were made only to move in the domestic circle, and when she dares depart from the smoke of her own chimney... she is entirely in regions that should be unknown to her... But if women are to be kept in these servile situations, it must not be expected to take place in this favored land, where the breath of Heaven makes us free... I think females have a right to think for themselves on every subject; admit this—it immediately becomes our duty to endeavor to think rightly."

Probasco’s paper, like other nativist journals, teemed with anti-Catholic bigotry and anti-immigrant hysteria. But, it also illustrated the reformist potential of antebellum nativism. This is especially evident in its stand on women’s rights. Three years before the Seneca Falls Conference, The American Woman reprinted a lecture in which O. Wheelock asked:

Should laws be made without the consent of the governed “No,” says man; “but the woman,” says he, “is represented by her husband—their interests are identical.” Now to say their interests and wishes are one implies that marriage abolishes individuality—that the wife no longer preserves the independent mind the Creator gave her... They do not always think and feel alike, however, for the mind is superior to the trammels of wedlock. But suppose she is not married, who represents her then? Should the majority rule? “Yes,” says the man. Well, some of the States have a majority of females. Should not the laws of the country represent the intelligence of the country? “Yes,” says he. “Well, in the schools I have taught, the females averaged far the best scholars, and I doubt not all the teachers in the land will say the same in the case of schools under their charge... In what respect does the mind of woman materially differ from that of man, that its interests and wishes should not be represented? Does any one suppose there is such a thing as sex in an immortal spirit? No. Then mind is mind, and why has it not equal claims whether it exist in man or woman?

Foreshadowing the arguments of late Nineteenth Century nativists and suffragists,

Wheelock added:

There are far more women than men in the ranks of virtue, humanity and religion; consequently, would not their votes ensure better rulers? ... Woman has ... done more to ameliorate the condition of the human race ten times over than men, and therefore by virtue of her good deeds and heaven-born nature, is she not morally entitled to enjoy all the immunities of the government in common with the other sex?87

Probasco went further than most of her contemporaries were willing to go. She ran into financial difficulties because those who promised to support the paper financially failed to do so. In July 1845 she criticized her male colleagues for their failure to support her while she praised the contributions of nativist women:

The publisher has done her part. Not a promise made to her when she commenced her enterprise and which induced her to commence it, has been kept—and she, a woman, has been faithfully issuing her paper from week to week, with the gradual diminution of her means of support. Will American men permit this? Never was there a cause which so largely enlisted the sympathies of the American ladies as that of the Native Americans! Never was there a cause so largely indebted to the ladies for success as the Native Americans! Will the men suffer it to be said that in this great cause the women only are faithful?88

Donations were not forthcoming and a disappointed Probasco went out of business.

Case Study—The Catholic Menace: Anna Ella Carroll and The Great American Battle

If Harriet Probasco exemplified the progressive potential of antebellum nativism, Anna Ella Carroll typified its anti-Catholic core. Anna Ella Carroll was born on 29 August 1815. The eldest of nine children, Carroll received a substantial education from her father, Thomas. The Carrolls had quite a pedigree—one Anna Ella was quite proud of. Her great-grandfather, Charles Carroll, had signed the Declaration of Independence and, as fate would have it, another ancestor had been the first Roman Catholic

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Archbishop in America. Thomas Carroll, despite being in the Maryland Legislature and later governor of that state, had a difficult time supporting his family. Instead his daughter, using the former governor’s connections, supported the family by becoming a professional publicist and occasionally securing employment for her father.\textsuperscript{89} Her father’s favorite, Anna Ella Carroll had been exposed to and interested in politics from a young age. She became ensconced in nativism after listening to the sermons of Reverend Robert Breckenridge in Baltimore. She joined the Reverend and many other Marylanders in blaming the festering sectional controversy on distant Rome rather than slavery.

Around 1855, nativist leader Horace Galpen asked Carroll to apply her literary talents to the nativist cause. She subsequently published seven books and pamphlets in support of the American Party and campaigned vigorously for Fillmore. Her fellow nativists declared her most important work, \textit{The Great American Battle}, the “textbook of the Cause.”\textsuperscript{90} Carroll’s works were decidedly partisan—highlighting the virtues of the American Party and the evils of Catholic Democrats. Her biographer, Janet Coryell, notes that Carroll’s books, as well as her letters to politicians and family members “lack any sense of the domesticity that was the usual lot and focus of most women in the mid-Nineteenth Century.”\textsuperscript{91} Carroll loved politics and developed “a compromise method of working within the political system that did not threaten her own sense of femininity, or

\textsuperscript{88} “The Publisher’s appeal to her Friends,” \textit{The American Woman} (Philadelphia) 19 July 1845, 2.
\textsuperscript{89} For more on Anna Ella Carroll’s background see Coryell, “Duty with Delicacy.” Carroll managed to get her beloved father appointed a naval officer in Baltimore by petitioning Secretary of State John M. Clayton for the position in the late 1840s, Coryell, 46.
\textsuperscript{90} Coryell, 48.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid, 46.
the male-dominant power structure.\footnote{Ibid, 59.} Through the "prepolitical behavior" of writing and petitioning, Carroll "found a way to live her life the way she wanted, doing what she wanted."\footnote{Ibid, 60.} Whether her male colleagues took her seriously or not is beside the point. She took herself seriously, and acted accordingly.

To prevent a backlash against her, Carroll professed that she had a duty, not the right, to participate in the political process.\footnote{Ibid.} Although she never married or had children, Carroll fancied herself a Republican Mother for the entire nation. In The Great American Battle she encouraged other would-be Republican Mothers to join the cause.

She wrote:

We want no Joans of Arc to make America vascular and alive; but when Popes, Cardinals, and Bishops have rendered her risky and ticklish, we want faithful and true women, who neither shriek nor protest, but pray; women who neither mount nor sink; who are neither heroines nor fools; but American women who can stand in their shoes, and take the plain topic of the Bible, and discourse and diffuse it to the depths of the people.\footnote{Ibid. 28.}

To those who had a problem with this she replied:

Some may think that it is not the province of a woman to enter in the rough path of a political critic or to discuss subjects which belong to the other sex. The writer’s answer to all remarks of this nature is, that she knows of no rule to exclude females from society, or the discussion of any subject which has an immediate bearing on the social, moral, and political destiny of the nation;—that the interests and destiny of mothers and daughters are common with those of fathers and brothers;—that if the apothegm of our orators is true, that it is the "mothers who make the men in a nation" then daughters and mothers should not be ignorant on subjects which relate to the manly development of the mind, and the molding of the rising generation;—that, while every well-cultivated female knows when she is within the province or without the bonds of female delicacy there need be no fear that she will trespass wither on the rights of the male sex, or wantonly expose herself to the charge of temerity. Truth is what concerns
mankind; and from whatever lips or pen it may proceed, it should be welcomed by the receiver, and especially when its aim is for the welfare and highest good of society, and of the nation.  

_The Great American Battle_ showcased Anna Ella Carroll’s beliefs. Carroll doggedly believed in the superiority of Anglo-Saxon, Protestant America. According to Carroll, the Anglo-Saxons made America “liberty’s paradise”. Carroll believed that “America has a mission to teach the world in her language, her history, and her laws.” Carroll insisted, and when “one hundred and fifty millions of freemen shall cover this domain, speaking the same language, and subject to the same laws, what mind can grasp the might and magnitude of free America!”

But, like so many other nativists, Carroll feared that the vine that God had blessed was somehow fragile. The Pope and his minions threatened Carroll’s America. They endangered its schools, its community safety, its political system, and the union of the states. In _The Great American Battle_, Carroll argued that the Pope’s nefarious schemes could only be stopped if (in descending importance) American women, the press, and American men did their duty.

Carroll wrote that, “the fate of America is the work of America’s daughters. On their stern virtue, their cultivated intelligence, their faithfulness to duty, to God, and their country, depend America’s salvation now.” America’s daughters needed to remember who they are: “It is the spirit of ’76 that should now circulate and diffuse like a wave over

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96 Anna Ella Carroll, _Review of the Pierce Administration_ (Boston: James French & Co., 1856), iv.
97 _The Great American Battle_, 251.
98 Ibid, iv.
99 Ibid, 326.
the nation.”101 The Catholic attempt to “destroy” the Bible was far more dangerous than the Stamp Act, according to Carroll, and the granddaughters of the 1850s had even more reason to come forward than their grandmothers had. They must urge their men on to acts of patriotism, and commit such acts themselves. For, inherently patriotic American women are “the pillar of support in the great moral and political revolution, which designs the overthrow of Popish oppression in Protestant America!”102

Believing it capable of influencing public opinion, Carroll charged the press with educating the public about the dangers of Popish influence. She called for the press to uncover Rome’s hierarchy in and schemes for America. With noble, patriotic women and an informed press urging them on, Carroll believed that American men will act patriotically at the ballot box. “Oh, men of America,” she pled, “make them depart from our temples . . . Come, sons of America, American freemen; put torches in dark places, and demand light, until it mingles with the visions of America.”103 Carroll’s words betray a current of anti-male sentiment harbored by many female nativists. Perhaps these women—who had thoroughly embraced the duties of Republican Motherhood—resented Republican Fathers for failing to do their duty and preserve a way of life that guaranteed the Mothers’ economic and social status.

Carroll ends The Great American Battle with a plug for the American Party:

And now, Americans, with a party that stands only upon the broad basis of the Constitution, and solemnly recognizes the rights of all, from the forest and prairies, the lakes and rivers of our Continent, let there be one common stand,

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100 Ibid, 14.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid, 21.
103 Ibid, 52.
irrespective of all parties, for the American flag and American principles, having inscribed upon our stars and stripes our American brothers, Fillmore and Donelson.\textsuperscript{104}

The leaders of the American Party tolerated Anna Ella Carroll's decidedly unladylike partisan stand because she used their own rhetoric of woman's moral authority and patriotism to justify her actions. She shared their basic assumptions about America; they shared her disdain for American men who refused to recognize and fight the Catholic menace.

Anna Ella Carroll used nativist rhetoric and the image of Republican Motherhood to live her life in a way that bore little resemblance to the gender norms of the day. Carroll remained politically active following the Know-Nothings' demise. Although she initially opposed Lincoln's election, she vigorously lobbied the Maryland governor to stay in the union in 1860-61.\textsuperscript{105} She received an oral contract from the War Department to write pamphlets in support of Lincoln's actions in the summer of 1861.\textsuperscript{106} She also met with Lincoln in regards to and published pamphlets in favor of the colonization of freedmen to British Honduras.

Then she invaded the ultimate "male" territory: military strategy. She claimed to have masterminded the Union Army's Tennessee Campaign. Apparently she had traveled to Tennessee early in the war, spoke with a riverboat pilot about navigating the Tennessee River, drew up plans for a possible campaign, and presented them to the assistant Secretary of War. She did not know that Grant had already adopted a similar strategy and subsequently believed that the War Department had adopted her plans.

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid, 364-365.
Carroll submitted a bill to Congress for services rendered to the Union. She also asked to receive the rank of major general in the Union Army. Congressmen—some of whom once read her works—scoffed at Carroll. She believed that Congress refused to honor her requests because she was a female civilian. After the Civil War she became a hero of sorts to the suffragists. Matilda Joslyn Gage and many others praised Carroll’s contributions to the Union and scorned the men who refused to acknowledge them.\(^\text{107}\) Congress, although it held hearings on the subject, never honored Carroll’s claims. She died destitute and alone in 1894.\(^\text{108}\)

The majority of female nativists in antebellum America were neither as assertive nor as political as Harriet Probasco and Anna Ella Carroll. Although neither activist denied that woman’s place was in the home, they both had a decidedly broad interpretation of what constituted the home. Probasco and Carroll used “home protection” to justify their actions long before the Women’s Christian Temperance Union or the National American Women’s Suffrage Association used it to justify woman’s suffrage. If the majority of antebellum nativist women were reluctant to publish their own newspapers or write partisan political literature, they still read both. The majority may have been tentative at first, but by the 1880s and 1890s nativist women adopted the

\(^{105}\) Ibid, 54.
\(^{106}\) Coryell, Janet. “Anna Ella Carroll and the Historians,” \textit{Civil War History} (June 1989), 120.
\(^{107}\) Matilda Joslyn Gage was one of the most important Nineteenth Century suffragists. Along with Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, she founded the National Woman Suffrage Association. For her views on Carroll see Matilda Joslyn Gage, “Who Planned the Tennessee Campaign of 1862?” Matilda Joslyn Gage Papers, The Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.
activist model espoused by Probasco and Carroll to fight the Catholic menace that supposedly threatened all they held dear.
CHAPTER II

SECURING OUR RIGHTS:
NATIVIST WOMEN IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The Historical Setting

The Civil War reshaped American politics, economics, and society. It united Northerners—be they Protestant or Catholic, native or immigrant—to an unprecedented degree. The industrial expansion that began during and blossomed after the war brought renewed confidence in America and her special destiny. In the midst of war and the heady days of its aftermath, nativist activity waned.

But, it did not disappear. Although Civil War historians rarely mention it, the Union Army was plagued by nativism. Defeats were often blamed on immigrants. The Draft Riots in New York and smaller versions elsewhere seemed to confirm nativists' worst fears about the loyalty of Catholics. During the War and Reconstruction nativist fraternities and sororities lost many members—but not their hard cores.

Those cores recruited new members by the thousand in the 1880s and 1890s. Intensified industrialization and urbanization, the rise of corporate America, and increased immigration led to renewed nativist activity. Nativism first bared its teeth at Asian immigrants in the West in the 1870s. It became viscous in the East in the 1880s. In that decade, over five million immigrants came into the country. The social upheaval accompanying the industrial revolution and the attendant problems of rapid urbanization—filth, crime, chaotic conditions, crowding, vice—were easily blamed on
them. In the beginning most of the new arrivals came from familiar places—Ireland, Germany, the British Isles. But by the late 1880s many also arrived from Southern and Eastern Europe. It became popular to blame labor strife and disorder on these unusual looking and speaking newcomers. The economic downturn of the 1890s intensified the new nativism. America's academic elite began to worry about "race suicide" and the future of the nation.

It is important to distinguish between nativism as a popular mood—with its fear of and distaste for new immigrants, race suicide and radical politics—and organized nativism. Organized nativism included the remnants of antebellum nativist societies and as well as newcomers such as the American Protective Association and Women's American Protective Association. Organized nativist societies brought together the most vigorous nativists—those most willing to subvert the Constitution to achieve their ends. It drew members from "the same quarters in America that had produced the Know-Nothings and their nativist precursors fifty years before."¹ Like their predecessors, these nativists were typically urban working or lower middle class urbanities experiencing status anxiety in the midst of social and economic change. Like their predecessors, these nativists insisted that the newcomers endangered America and appointed themselves its protectors. Like their predecessors, many organized nativists had "progressive sympathies and aspirations" and feared that Catholics would interfere with reform.

And like their predecessors, the new organized nativists were evangelical Protestants who believed that the Pope masterminded the crises afflicting their America.

¹ Ibid, 169.
They did not, as a rule, spew venom at all immigrants. They remained principally concerned with Catholics—be they immigrants or third generation Americans. Anti-Catholicism burgeoned in the 1880s and 1890s. The expansion of parochial school construction, rising Catholic influence in the cities, the emergence of a Catholic middle class, the celebration of 400th anniversary of Columbus' arrival, and the appointment of Archbishop Francis Satolli as the Pope’s representative at the World’s Fair in Chicago all contributed to the anti-Catholic revival. Also, many of the new nativists shared the “progressive sympathies and aspirations” of their predecessors and blamed the Pope, a supposedly “reactionary despot, hostile to liberty and progress alike,” for the setbacks of the Progressive Era. While much of the nation fretted over the “new immigration” and “race suicide” organized nativists insisted that the Catholic Church—dangerously more organized in the United States than it was in the past—was the principal threat to the New Eden.

The Reemergence of Nativist Sororities

The Daughters of Liberty, one of the few antebellum female nativist sororities to survive the Civil War, experienced a revival in the 1870s. This sorority, along with the Junior Order of United American Mechanics broke from their parent order, the United American Mechanics, in 1875 because of the former's “lack of zeal.” Members of the Daughters of Liberty tended to be young working class women drawn to the insurance

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3 Knobel, 180.
program and other benefits offered by the organization.\textsuperscript{5} The Young Lady Naval Guards also catered to the needs of young working women. Its members took a vow to lay down their lives for the American flag.\textsuperscript{6}

The most influential nativist sororities organized in the late 1880s. The Loyal Women of American Liberty came together in 1888. Founded by the flamboyant Margaret Shepherd, this organization was one of the more conservative sororities. Members pledged themselves to limiting immigration, reforming naturalization laws, working for compulsory education, keeping the Bible in public schools, and doing evangelical work.\textsuperscript{7} Ironically, most of its members were immigrants from Britain and Protestant Ireland who avowed that they were Americans at heart.\textsuperscript{8}

Protestant immigrants also joined the Women’s American Protective Association (WAPA). The WAPA informally organized in the late 1880s under the leadership of Blanche Reynolds of Illinois. It received formal approval to act as an auxiliary of the American Protective Association (APA) in 1892. Like its male counterpart, the WAPA attracted its largest following in the Midwest. WAPA chapters also appear to have been active in areas where women had the right to vote in local school board elections.\textsuperscript{9}

The Independent Women Voters (IWV) proved to be the most effective female nativist organization of the 1880s and 1890s—at least at the regional level. Organized by Eliza Trask Hill in the midst of Boston’s public school crisis of the late 1880s, the IWV

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{5} Knobel, 185.
  \item \textsuperscript{6} “Patriotic Young Women,” \textit{APA Magazine}, 1 (4) Sept. 1895.
  \item \textsuperscript{7} \textit{For God and American Liberty} (Boston: National Association Loyal Women of American Liberty, 1891), cover.
  \item \textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{9} Kinzer, 81.
\end{itemize}
succeeded in removing Catholics from the Boston School Committee for nearly a decade.
It contributed to Catholic setbacks in Boston politics through much of the 1890s. The
IWV published a paper, *Woman's Voice and Public School Champion*, that spoke for
female nativists of the late Nineteenth Century in much the same way that *The American
Woman* spoke for their antebellum predecessors.

The new generation of female nativists were more assertive than their predecessors. While they still embraced the concept of Republican Motherhood they no longer felt the need to justify their actions in light of woman's moral superiority and innate patriotism. They assumed that they had an important voice in society—and that society should listen to them. They assumed that they had the right—not simply the duty—to get involved in the anti-Catholic crusade.10 Indeed, by the 1880s and 1890s, female nativist societies had appropriated for themselves the role of actively protecting the country from those who threatened it. No longer would woman confine herself to instilling virtue and Americanism in her children and male relatives. "It is high time we organized for the safety of our country," wrote the President of the California Women's American Protective Association.11 Eliza Trask Hill, one of the most influential and outspoken of the new breed of female nativists, decried American men for "selling their birthright for a mess of pottage" and advised them to seek "the aid from the womanhood, who do not fill our penitentiaries and prisons."12 "Our men have not done their duty,"

10 See for example, "How Best to Protect Men," *Woman's Voice and Public School Champion* (Boston) 19 June 1890, 1.
11 Mrs. ME Richardson, "Apathy No Longer Pardonable," *APA Magazine* 2 (3) February 1896, 872.
echoed nativist lecturer Mrs. Joseph Slattery, "hence it is that we women must take up the neglected work of our men and do our utmost to repair the past . . . America can still be saved from the curse of Roman rule." The new assertive female nativists focused their attention on three issues: the Catholic Menace, Woman Suffrage, and the need to use suffrage rights to fight the Catholic Menace.

Motives and Activities

If anything, late nineteenth century female nativists were more rabidly anti-Catholic than their predecessors. Their anti-Catholic refrain went something like this: Catholics owe their highest allegiance to the Pope instead of to the Constitution and laws of the land. Because of that, Catholics can never be loyal citizens. They vote according to the Pope’s wishes rather than their own consciences. The Catholic Church puts women in convents to satisfy the desires of licentious priests. Romanism teaches its subjects religious intolerance instead of religious liberty. The Catholic Church does not allow its subjects to think for themselves; they must submit to the Pope’s demands or risk eternal damnation. The Catholic Church demands censorship of ideas and the press. It strives for union of church and state and is opposed to the public schools. In short, the Catholic Church’s fundamental principles conflict with America’s core values.

Nativst women joined their brothers in vowing to protect America against the inroads of the “un-American church.” The Woman’s Voice and Public School Champion announced:

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We venture to assert that this is a Protestant state, and that the United States constitute a Protestant nation; and that it is our patriotic duty, as Protestants, to maintain here the Protestant faith and religion; and it is our most sacred duty to preserve this faith and religion and the free institutions founded thereon with the most watchful care, and, especially to guard and protect our state and country form all attempts, whether open or covert, to turn the people of this liberty-loving land to the slavery and idolatry of the Church and Pope of Rome.

Nativist women and men bristled at accusations that they were intolerant and chided their fellow Americans for failing to see the danger posed by Catholicism.15 “Let me warn you,” wrote one APA spokesperson:

That if this movement shall fail in uniting the Protestant world on the common ground embraced in our platform, in less than 50 years from this day, Rome will have so forged her chains about our Government that you and I, perchance, if we are living, will be given our choice to either fall down at the feet of the Pope or spend our days in a Roman prison, or suffer the guillotine.16

Nativist men and women believed that Catholics stored arms in the basements of their churches in anticipation of a new religious war. “Our attention has recently been called to the fact that Romanists are gaining great power in America by the purchase of valuable tracts of land situated in commanding places, which in the case of war, which seems inevitable, would give them immense advantage” warned the Woman’s Voice and Public School Champion.17 In 1893 thousands of nativists stockpiled foodstuffs and weapons because they believed that the Pope had commanded his followers to exterminate all heretics “on or about the feast of Ignatius Loyola.”18

Late nineteenth century nativists with progressive sympathies feared that the rapid growth of Catholicism would interfere with reform. They believed progressive reform

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15 See for example Woman’s Voice and Public School Champion (Boston) 6 February 1892, 2.
16 Jackson, 56.
17 “Danger Ahead,” Woman’s Voice and Public School Champion (Boston) 30 May 1891, 3.
was only possible in a Protestant country. If the country ceased to be Protestant it would "fall into the hands of despotic tyranny," warned the President of the California WAPA.  

"'Protestantism rides on the car of progress, but Romanism would put us back in the Middle Ages,'" admonished another nativist lecturer. Nativist-progressives supported a number of municipal reform initiatives to challenge the influence of political machines believed to be dominated by corrupting Catholics.

Progressive nativist women insisted that "popery is the inveterate enemy to the elevation of woman." Nativists believed that American women were freer than any other women in the world—thanks to the country’s pure Protestant heritage. "Oh! America, noble land, to save you from bondage every true woman should in gratitude to you rise up and say: Columbia has made me free and I will help to keep her free," toasted Mrs. Joseph Slattery, one of the most sought-after lecturers on the nativist circuit. Slattery and other nativist women rejected the theory that Rome did anything to elevate women. Instead, they argued that Catholics do everything in their power to degrade and enslave women.

As they did prior to the Civil War, thousands of women flocked to the nativist movement because it served their socio-economic interests. Working class female nativists bristled at having to compete with immigrants for jobs as domestics and

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21 *Woman’s Voice and Public School Champion* (Boston) 12 January 1895, 4.
23 Ibid, 1380.
industrial workers. They feared having their work associated with low class immigrants and consequently losing what remained of their social status. Middle class nativist women feared that the emerging Catholic middle class would undermine their already precarious position in urban communities.

The late nineteenth century nativist movement loathed corporate America nearly as much as it detested the immigrant working class and rising Catholic middle class. Nativists believed that the one could not exist without the other. Nativist speakers elucidated a labor theory of value and raged against the “soulless corporations” that persecuted honest laborers. Nativist sororities and fraternities operated on the mutual assessment principal and offered mutual assessment insurance to their members. They provided survivors’ unemployment insurance and funeral benefits. The *Woman's Voice and Public School Champion* served as a career networking service. It offered to help Protestant teachers, nurses and other Protestant girls looking for “situations” find employment. The paper encouraged its wealthier readers to employ good Protestant girls so that they would not be pressured by exploitative male employers into a life of prostitution.

As they did in the antebellum era, women’s nativist societies doubled as temperance organizations and recruited members interested in temperance reform.

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24 See for example, “The Ideal Republic,” *Woman's Voice and Public School Champion* (Boston) 30 September 1893, 1 and “The Rights of Poor Tenants,” *Woman's Voice and Public School Champion* (Boston) 13 March 1890, 2.
25 Knobel, 178.
26 See for example *Woman’s Voice and Public School Champion* (Boston) 16 January 1890, 4 and 6 February 1892, 2.
27 See for example, “Can’t Something Be Done to Prevent It?” *Woman's Voice and Public School Champion* (Boston) 22 October 1892, 2.
Postbellum nativist sororities spewed their venom at saloons and organized brewers rather than at the drunkard. They believed that Rome frustrated their efforts for temperance reform. The *Woman's Voice and Public School Champion* lamented:

> Our beloved America that boasts of its independence and greatness, the youngest of the nations, has reason to humble itself before God and mourn that with its magnificent opportunities, it is prostituting them all, and is in abject slavery to the liquor oligarchy, and its twin brother, the Romish hierarchy.\(^{28}\)

Nativists were quick to point out that Catholics dominated the liquor industry. The *APA Magazine*, for example, encouraged temperance women to note that, in Philadelphia, 65 percent of manufacturers, 75 percent of brewers, and the vast majority of retailers of liquor (including 3,696 women—only one of whom was a Protestant) were Catholic.\(^{29}\)

> Of course, nativist sororities were not the only temperance organizations to complain of the twin slavery of "rum and Romanism." The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) lodged similar complaints. There was a considerable amount of cross over between the WCTU and nativist sororities. Eliza Trask Hill, for example, started her public career as part of the "prison, jail, and almshouse" and suffrage departments of the WCTU. In *Woman’s Voice and Public School Champion*, she often praised the activities of the WCTU and encouraged her readers to join the organization. She wrote: "There is no more moral movement of our day broader, more earnest and intense, purer and sweeter, than the work of the W.C.T.U. They are entitled to our warmest sympathy, and our prayers for their continued unity, inspiration and enducement with power."\(^{30}\) Meanwhile, WCTU lecturers often made appearances at

\(^{28}\) *Woman's Voice and Public School Champion* (Boston) 6 February 1892, 2.

\(^{29}\) "For the Eye of Protestant Jack-Papists," *APA Magazine* 1 (3) August 1895, 245.

\(^{30}\) *Woman's Voice and Public School Champion* (Boston) 6 February 1892, 3.
nativist gatherings to complain the Catholic Church's influence in America.\textsuperscript{31} The WCTU, however, was not sufficiently anti-Catholic according to the leading female nativists. Eliza Trask Hill, for example, chastised the WCTU for admitting Catholic women and warned that the organization would not realize its full potential until it freed itself from "the bondage of Rome."\textsuperscript{32}

Once again, concern for the public schools brought more middle class women into the nativist fold than any other factor. In the late nineteenth century the Catholic Church intensified its emphasis on parochial education, renewed its efforts to secure funding for parochial schools, and pressured public officials to discourage the spread of blatant anti-Catholicism in the public schools. Nativists screamed that the public schools were under attack. They insisted, and thousands of Americans agreed, that the three pillars of American civilization were Republican government, the public schools, and Protestantism. "To tamper with our public schools means a blow at our liberty and progress," insisted Eliza Trask Hill.\textsuperscript{33} The Daughters of Liberty argued that it was the special prerogative of American womanhood to protect the secular (read: Protestant) schools from ecclesiastical control and ensure that the schools instilled authentic "American" values.\textsuperscript{34}

Nativist women resisted any attempt to take the Protestant Bible out of the public schools. The Loyal Women of American Liberty insisted that the Bible "will perpetuate

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{31} See for example "WCTU at Music Hall," \textit{Woman's Voice and Public School Champion} (Boston) 21 November 1891, 1.
\footnotetext{32} "Jesuitical Methods," \textit{Woman's Voice and Public School Champion} (Boston) 22 July 1893, 2.
\footnotetext{33} "On Bishop Keane's Lecture," \textit{Woman's Voice and Public School Champion} (Boston) 27 January 1894, 1.
\footnotetext{34} Knobel, 178-179.
\end{footnotes}
Protestantism ... heighten intelligence ... lessen crime and superstition" if kept in the public schools.\textsuperscript{35} The Loyal Women asked, "Is not this [reading the King James Bible] the sure way of enriching, at the very root, the character of the future law framers and sustainers, and the future motherhood upon whose moral basis our nation's independence shall rest?"\textsuperscript{36} The Loyal Women and other nativist sororities also insisted that only compulsory education in the English language would qualify newcomers for republican citizenship.

Its approach to public schools underscores the dual nature of late nineteenth century nativism. In spite of their vitriolic anti-Catholicism, female nativists could be quite progressive on educational issues. \textit{Woman's Voice and Public School Champion} published numerous articles about the latest educational theories and practices and routinely condemned the use of corporeal punishment in schools.\textsuperscript{37} It praised rabbis who supported the public schools and encouraged the Boston School Committee to have rabbis give the opening prayers at its meetings.\textsuperscript{38} The Independent Women Voters displayed concern for African-American education. They insisted that Black students get a public education and asked their supporters to send supplies to African-American school children in the South. They condemned Southerners for their treatment of Blacks.

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{For God and American Liberty}, 7.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{37} See for example \textit{Woman's Voice and Public School Champion} (Boston) February 6 and 13 1890, 1.
\textsuperscript{38} See for example \textit{Woman's Voice and Public School Champion} (Boston) 16 January 1890, 3.
and feared that the Catholic Church would succeed in converting disenfranchised and abused African-Americans.\textsuperscript{39}

Nativists opposed any public support for Catholic schools, reformatories, charities, or any other institution not owned and controlled by the government.\textsuperscript{40} They likewise demanded that all such institutions be regularly inspected by government authorities. Native American education became their pet concern because the Catholic Church received tax dollars to operate reservation schools.\textsuperscript{41} Nativists put pressure on the government to replace Catholic reservation schools with government-run boarding schools.\textsuperscript{42}

Nativist women and men fretted over the fate of women sentenced to live in Catholic reformatories. Jane Woodworth Bruner alerted readers of the \textit{APA Magazine}:

American girls . . . consigned to Romish institutions by courts . . . are forced to work 10 or 12 hours daily for factories, stores, etc., and the revenue from their labor goes to enrich the private Roman Catholic corporations . . . [This has] reduced wages below living rates for self-supporting women and degraded labor more than Chinese laborers.\textsuperscript{43}

And, as did their antebellum foremothers, late nineteenth century nativists tormented themselves with visions of what happened to women in convents. Margaret Shepherd, founder of the Loyal Women of American Liberty, professed to be an escaped nun and tantalized thousands with her tales of convent cruelties. She accused priests of being

\textsuperscript{39} See for example \textit{Woman's Voice and Public School Champion} (Boston) 16 January 1890 and 12 June 1890, 1-2.
\textsuperscript{40} Jackson, 22.
\textsuperscript{41} See for example, “Help for the Indians,” \textit{Woman's Voice and Public School Champion} (Boston) 13 May 1891, 2.
\textsuperscript{42} Knobel, 182.
“wolves in sheep’s clothing . . . who, under the cassock, carry a heart full of corruption; who know no pity when seeking to lure young and innocent girls into sin.”

Shepherd estimated that 80 percent of the children in Catholic orphanages were the illegitimate offspring of priests and begged Protestant mothers not to send their daughters to convent schools. She lamented that Rome “is stealing our pure womanhood” and implored American women to “warn the people of this and other lands of the great danger threatening us.”

To stop the “shameless traffic” in infants and women, the Independent Women Voters and other nativist sororities encouraged their supporters to put pressure on state representatives to stop funding Catholic charities, hospitals, schools, and reformatories.

The Independent Women Voters opened their own home for wayward (Protestant) girls. It joined the APA and WAPA in demanding that the government tax all church property. This would have the benefit of lowering the taxes paid by honest American citizens.

Many nativist sororities engaged in benevolent work and attracted members interested in their charitable/evangelical activities. The Woman’s Voice and Public School Champion regularly endorsed the activities of the Woman’s Educational and Industrial Union and the King’s Daughters because of their attempts to help weary and

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44 Margaret Shepherd, My Life in the Convent (Toledo, OH: Book and Bible House, 1946), 182.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid, 185.
47 See for example “The Carney Hospital Steal,” Woman’s Voice and Public School Champion (Boston) 23 April 1892, 2
48 Jackson, 24-25.
“friendless” women. The Loyal Women of American Liberty placed great emphasis on their “Cup of Loving Service” department and asked potential recruits, “Is not this a time when woman can reach forth to the people of our land and rescue, individually and collectively, from the many errors and superstitions which seem so deeply rooted in our midst?” The Loyal Women of American Liberty’s special concern was French and Italian Catholic women whom the organization hoped to save through sponsoring Protestant Sunday schools, camps, prayer meetings, and sewing clubs. Eliza Trask Hill, who in addition to heading the Independent Women Voters also served as President of the New England Helping Hand Society, encouraged her readers to help “capture” our “Roman Catholic sisters” from the lascivious grip of Romish priests.

To ameliorate all of these evils, nativist women and men urged Congress to pass legislation limiting immigration. The Loyal Women of American Liberty announced that “we are resolved that during this year, we will use our influence as opportunity offers, toward urging legislation to a limitation of immigration.” The APA and WAPA called for prohibition of “pauper labor,” arguing that if the country can erect tariffs to protect manufacturers it can certainly erect similar “tariffs” to protect American laborers.

While millions of uneasy Americans supported immigration restriction, the organized nativists went beyond popular nativism and advocated extreme measures to

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49 See for example “The Origin of the Work,” Woman’s Voice and Public School Champion (Boston) 9 January 1890, 2 and “Aid for Friendless Women,” Woman’s Voice and Public School Champion (Boston) 13 May 1891. 50 For God and American Liberty, 4. 51 Ibid, 4-5. 52 “Roman Catholic Women—A Woman’s Meeting,” Woman’s Voice and Public School Champion (Boston) 14 November 1891, 1. 53 For God and American Liberty, 2. 54 Jackson, 30.
deal with the supposed crisis. “No man should be allowed to participate in the political affairs of this country who is the subject or ally of a foreign power that is at war with our national institutions. *No ballot for the man who takes his politics from the Vatican!*” wrote one of Boston’s foremost nativists. The *Woman’s Voice and Public School Champion* added that the Catholic immigrant “must not be allowed to reach out his hand and grasp the reigns of government.” Nativists argued that Catholics should not be allowed to teach in public schools. “If we are to expect patriotism and loyalty to our institutions,” advised the APA, “we must first of all have those, and those only, who are truly patriotic and loyal teach our schools . . . when you employ the Romanist to teach in your public schools, you simply offer a premium for treason.” Fearing that immigrants, especially Irish Catholic ones, were unfit for military service many nativists called for their eviction from the American armed forces. A chapter of the Madison, Wisconsin WAPA issued the following plea in 1895: “Never! no never! place in our Army or Navy a subject of that church which is and always has been in constant conspiracy against the rights and liberties of all mankind. Again we say, we protest against [this].”

Nativist women shared these ideas with one another and the public. In Boston the Loyal Women of American Liberty and the Independent Women Voters held weekly meetings at Music Hall that brought in prominent anti-Catholic, public school, temperance, and women’s rights lecturers. Nativist sororities organized boycotts of

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55 James B. Dunn, *The Pope’s Last Veto in American Politics*, (Boston: Committee of One Hundred, 1890), 16.
56 “Roman Catholic Women—A Woman’s Meeting,” *Woman’s Voice and Public School Champion* (Boston) 14 November 1891, 1.
57 See for example *Woman’s Voice and Public School Champion* (Boston) 22 October 1892, 2.
58 Jackson, 1895.
Catholic businesses, pressured real estate owners to sell only to Protestants, encouraged businesses to hire only Protestants, and warned Protestants to never let a Catholic into their organizations "for the Romanists always aim to obtain control of organizations."\textsuperscript{60}

Nativist women in Boston marched in the Independence Day parade of 1895 that resulted in the death of one and hospitalization of three Catholics.\textsuperscript{61} Nativist sororities passed out literature about and gave lectures on how to pay poll taxes and "vote properly." The Independent Women Voters offered a carriage service to women voters who could not make it to polling places. Like the Women of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s, some of the women’s nativist sororities of the late Nineteenth Century served a social function. The WAPA, for example, hosted banquets, dances, recitals, and other activities that brought nativist women, men, and their children together. It also supervised the Junior APA, a “training” organization for youth ages 14-21.\textsuperscript{62}

Nativist women dedicated themselves to securing woman suffrage. They saw the ballot as a weapon that could be used against the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{63} They also saw it as a means to secure temperance and other progressive legislation. Nativist men, who took note of nativist victories in cities and states that had woman suffrage, “suddenly discovered that there was a large untapped pool of prospective political supporters among middle-class and upper-middle-class Protestant women.”\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{60} "Pertinent Suggestions," \textit{Woman's Voice and Public School Champion} (Boston) 19 June 1890, 1.
\textsuperscript{61} For information on the East Boston Riot see "Insults, Stones and Pistol Shots Greet the Great Patriotic Procession in the Streets of East Boston," \textit{APA Magazine} (3) August 1890, 260 and Lord, Sexton, and Harrington, 145-146.
\textsuperscript{62} Kinzer, 48.
\textsuperscript{63} See for example \textit{Woman's Voice and Public School Champion} (Boston) 8 May 1890, 2.
\textsuperscript{64} Knobel, 201.
how to use the ballot to produce the best results,” raved the APA Magazine in response to the Equality State’s passage of a law placing taxes on all church, charitable, and educational institutions not under control of the state and not actual church buildings.\(^{65}\)

William Traynor, the most influential President of the American Protective Association endorsed woman suffrage and acclaimed that “‘patriotism and reform would surely follow when women voted.”\(^{66}\) Historians such as David Bennett doubt that male nativists had any sincere commitment to woman suffrage. He writes that “the common ground [between suffragists and nativists] was more illusion than reality . . . There might be women on the fringes of the movement . . . There might be common cause in calls for the franchise for native women. But there was no acceptance of equality of the sexes by nativist men . . . most of whom recoiled at the notion of strong and aggressive females threatening the traditional relations between the sexes.”\(^{67}\)

Bennett may be right about the attitudes of a majority of male nativists. But women were more involved in American nativism than he assumes and were sincerely dedicated to woman suffrage. Undoubtedly, nativist women saw woman suffrage as a means to an end: protecting public schools from Catholics, securing temperance legislation, enacting municipal reform. But nativist women—at least the most active of them—supported woman suffrage because they saw it as right as well as useful. The masthead of the Woman’s Voice and Public School Champion read: “In the administration of a state, neither a woman as a woman, nor a man as a man, has any

\(^{65}\) APA Magazine 1(4) September 1895, 391.
\(^{66}\) Quoted in Kinzer, 203.
special function, but the gifts are equal—Plato.” Eliza Trask Hill insisted that men did not have a divine right to rule women. Nor did they have the right to subject women to laws and taxes that they had no say in. Women, Hill insisted, had inalienable rights, and had best up uphold them. Hill testified in favor of woman suffrage before the Massachusetts Legislature in 1892, 1893, and 1895. Her group, the Independent Women Voters, often joined the Loyal Women of American Liberty and Massachusetts Suffrage Association in appealing for woman suffrage.

Nativism coursed through the larger American woman suffrage movement. Between 1885 and 1900 that movement succumbed to racist/nativist arguments, although it never completely forgot its egalitarian origins. Many suffragists, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Carrie Chapman Catt, joined their nativist sisters in calling for “educated suffrage.” “When any vote on the Suffrage bill is taken,” complained the editors of the *History of Woman Suffrage*:

> It is enough to make the women who sit in the gallery weep to hear the “O’s” and the “Mc’s,” almost to a man, thunder forth the emphatic “No!”; and to think that these men (some of whom a few years ago were walking over their native bogs, with hardly the right to live and breathe) should vote away so thoughtlessly the rights of women of the country in which they have found a shelter and a home. When they came to this country, poor, and with no inheritance . . . the ballot was fully given to them . . . Why cannot men, who have been political serfs in their own countries, see the incongruity of voting against the enfranchisement of over

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71 Ibid, 165.
one-half of the inhabitants of the state which has made true human beings of them?\textsuperscript{72}

Nativist women did their part to convince the “O’s” and the “Mc’s” to vote against woman suffrage. The American Catholic Church came to associate woman’s suffrage with anti-Catholicism.\textsuperscript{73} Traditional Catholic clergymen, already opposed to woman’s suffrage, warned their flocks that woman suffrage would bring about “the development of a political structure and social climate deleterious to Catholicism.”\textsuperscript{74}

Their nativism did nothing to endear nativist feminists to the Democratic Party, which already worried about women’s support of temperance and male nativists support of the Republican Party.\textsuperscript{75} Well aware of official Catholic and Democratic Party opposition to woman suffrage, nativist feminists found another reason to hate the Pope: he obviously intended to re-enslave the “New Woman.”\textsuperscript{76}

Nativist feminists worked for more than suffrage reform. Most issues of the *Woman’s Voice and Public School Champion* included a column entitled “Laws Concerning Women.” The column was designed to “awaken women to realize the wrong being done them legally.”\textsuperscript{77} Eliza Trask Hill advised women to attend sessions of the Massachusetts Legislature to “let our Legislators know that the women are watching the Legislature’s acts and at the same time their own interests.”\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{73} Lois Merk, “Boston’s Historic Public Schools Crisis,” *New England Quarterly* 31 (2) June 1958, 194.
\textsuperscript{74} Kenneally, 43.
\textsuperscript{75} Merk, 198-199.
\textsuperscript{76} “Men, Women, and Things,” *Woman’s Voice and Public School Champion* (Boston) 13 July 1895, 1.
\textsuperscript{77} *Woman’s Voice and Public School Champion* (Boston) 9 January 1890, 1.
\textsuperscript{78} *Woman’s Voice and Public School Champion* (Boston) 16 January 1890, 3.
Public School Champion ran numerous articles about successful working women and encouraged women to become doctors, Reverends, and stateswomen. The Independent Women Voters insisted that women receive equal pay with men and that the government secure women's property rights.

Case Study: Nativist Women Impact Local Politics—The Boston Public Schools Crisis

In 1879 the Massachusetts Legislature passed school suffrage legislation that allowed women to vote for members of their local school committees. The school committee franchise became a useful weapon in the anti-Catholic crusade and "had the effect of associating woman suffrage and nativism in the Catholic mind."

Despite school suffrage, women voters were not allowed to take part in the party caucuses that chose candidates for school committees. In response, numerous women's organizations put together their own "Woman's Ticket" that voters could request at the polls. While the Democrats routinely ignored the Woman's Ticket, the Republicans often placed a few of the candidates endorsed by it on their own ballot.

At first, the Woman's Ticket did not enjoy much success. Those responsible for its preparation believed that liquor interests and other "viscious elements" (read: the Catholic hierarchy) had united to defeat the Woman's Ticket. Then in 1888-89 nativism—always simmering near the surface—boiled over in Boston and nativist women became a force in Boston politics. The crisis began when a high school history

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79 See for example "Woman's World," Woman's Voice and Public School Champion (Boston) 29 January 1895, 1.
80 "Why are the Independent Women Voters Organized as a Separate Body?" Woman's Voice and Public School Champion (Boston) 23 April 1892, 2.
81 Jackson, 47.
82 Merk, 172-173.
teacher, one Mr. Travis, got in trouble with the Boston School Committee for telling his students that Martin Luther opposed indulgences because they gave people "'permission to commit sin.'"\(^{84}\) One of his Catholic pupils objected to this definition, at which point Mr. Travis referred to the text authorized by the Boston School Committee, William Swinton's *Outlines of World History*, which supported his definition of the term. Catholic parents protested against the continued use of this text and pressured the School Committee to do something about the anti-Catholic text—as well as the history teacher. In response, the School Committee reprimanded the teacher, reassigned him to a different school to teach a "safer" subject (English), and agreed to drop Swinton in favor of a less biased text.

According to one historian these decisions "set off an hysterical Protestant campaign against the Boston Public School Board."\(^{85}\) An anti-Catholic coalition of nativist women led that campaign. Angry women and men, led by Margaret Shepherd and the Loyal Women of American Liberty, formed a secret "Committee of One Hundred" which wrote pamphlets and sent out lecturers to rouse the public. The Committee of One Hundred not only demanded Travis' reinstatement and the reintroduction of the Swinton text, but also called for the removal of Catholics from the School Committee, disenfranchisement of Irish Catholics and the destruction of parochial schools.\(^{86}\)

\(^{83}\) Ibid, 176-177.
\(^{84}\) Quoted in Kenneally, 62.
\(^{85}\) Merk, 180.
\(^{86}\) Ibid.
While anti-Catholic propaganda titillated the population, members of the WCTU, Margaret Shepherd, and Eliza Trask Hill decided to "bring out the woman's vote" to protect public schools.\(^{87}\) Eliza Trask Hill, a former school teacher from Warren, Massachusetts and member of the WCTU, formed the Independent Women Voters to fight against Catholics, campaign for the public schools, and get Protestant women to vote. She worked with Shepherd to convince Protestant ministers to endorse their "get out the vote" campaign. The ministers, so overwhelmed by anti-Catholicism that they forgot about their usual anti-suffrage position, proved eager to help.\(^ {88}\) Within a year the number of women registered to vote increased ten-fold (to over 20,000).\(^ {89}\) They voted en masse for the School Committee list put forward by the Committee of One Hundred.\(^ {90}\) Those who voted to remove Travis and the Swinton text lost their places on the School Committee in Fall 1888.\(^ {91}\) In 1889 the anti-Catholic coalition succeeded in defeating all Catholic candidates for the school committee and electing two more women to it.\(^ {92}\)

Eliza Trask Hill's Independent Women Voters proved very effective in mobilizing Protestant women to vote. The Independent Women Voters fancied themselves a political party and launched their own paper *Woman's Voice and Public School Champion*. The leaders of the organization dedicated themselves to the political work of registering Protestant women voters and getting them to the polls. It insisted that the public schools were the "cornerstone of our American republic," that women must

\(^{87}\) Lord, Sexton, and Harrington, 128.  
\(^{88}\) Merk, 182.  
\(^{89}\) Ibid, 181.  
\(^{90}\) Lord, Sexton, and Harrington, 126.  
\(^{91}\) Merk, 187.
perpetuate the schools “in their true liberal spirit,” and that women must make sure that the schools were not harmed by a “hostile sect.” Approximately 10,000 women joined the Independent Women Voters. When Massachusetts adopted the Australian Ballot in 1890, the Independent Women Voters succeeded in getting their slate of candidates on the official ballot. Eliza Trask Hill raved “This is the first instance of the kind on record, where women have been recognized as a distinct political party in the United States.”

Through most of the 1890s, the Independent Women Voters had great success in keeping Catholics off the Boston School Committee. The strength of the organization alarmed many Catholics, Protestants, and suffragists. An eclectic group, the Public School Union, headed by historian Francis Parkman and prominent suffragist Alice Stone Blackwell, hoped to counter Hill’s influence. Hill, a suffragist herself, lamented that the suffragists who joined the Public School Union were “disloyal” and “un-American.”

While national figures such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton complained that school suffrage was barely something worth fighting for, they could not ignore the fact that the public schools and anti-Catholicism had done, in Lucy Stone’s words, “more for suffrage than an age of conventions.”

Case Study—Margaret Shepherd

The late Nineteenth Century nativist movement appealed to thousands of paranoid, yet sincere, evangelical Protestant urbanites. It also attracted a fair number of

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92 Ibid, 191. Washington state also permitted women to vote in school elections. In 1894, nativist women helped elect the APA’s slate of candidates in Seattle, Tacoma, and Spokane. See Kinzer, 111.
93 Woman’s Voice and Public School Champion (Boston) 23 January 1890, 1.
94 Merk, 193.
95 Woman’s Voice and Public School Champion (Boston) 3 April 1890, 1.
96 Ibid.
charlatans and political hangers-on. The most infamous of such female nativists was Margaret Shepherd. For a few years Shepherd was the “heroine of the new crusade” and a “great power in Boston.” She claimed to have been a content nun until she mysteriously got hold of a Bible, read it, and became aware “of the political aspirations of Romanism in the United States.” She left the Catholic Church and joined the crusade against Rome. She, an ex-nun, became popular on the Boston lecture circuit in the late 1880s. In the midst of the Boston Public Schools Crisis she decided to form the Loyal Women of American Liberty. That organization played an important role in organizing Protestant women to vote in school committee elections. In the early 1890s Boston learned that Mrs. Shepherd was not all she seemed to be. Word leaked out that she had an illegitimate child in Great Britain and had spent time in a jail for theft. She had also married and deserted a husband in Maine. A shaken Shepherd admitted that all of the above was true but insisted that the illegitimate child was the son of a priest who had taken advantage of her and that she had to steal to feed her baby. Her reputation temporarily soared.

Shepherd wrote an autobiography, *My Life In the Convent*, that skewered the Catholic Church for what it did to women. The past continued to haunt Shepherd, however, and by the early 1890s even the Loyal Women of American Liberty had to admit that the closest Mrs. Shepherd had ever come to being a nun was spending two years in Catholic-run home for fallen women. Stunned that the Loyal Women would dismiss their founder, Shepherd temporarily considered returning to Catholicism. She

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97 Quoted in Merk. 183.
remained a Protestant, but her reputation remained tarnished. Still, she continued to periodically lecture on life in a convent until 1897. She died in Canada in 1903.  

**Case Study—Women's American Protective Association (WAPA), Michigan Branch**

Henry Bowers, a dedicated believer of most Catholic conspiracy theories, founded the American Protective Association (APA) in Clinton, Iowa in 1887. By the mid-1890s the organization likely had half a million members, although it leaders claimed to have three million followers. Those followers vowed to keep Catholics out of political office, hire Protestant employees, and frequent Protestant business establishments. In the first years of its existence, the APA seems to have been confined to towns in the upper Mississippi Valley but it became a national organization under the leadership of William J. Traynor in the 1890s.  

The APA played a decisive role in state politics in Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Illinois and had a significant influence in the affairs of California, Washington, and Colorado. The APA reminded its contemporaries of the Know-Nothings—and it certainly shared the American Party's political agenda—but it differed from its predecessor in a few significant ways. The APA, while certainly no friend of the immigrant, was more anti-Catholic than anti-immigrant. It required "loyalty to true Americanism" but insisted that one need not be born in America to be American at

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98 Lord, Sexton, and Harrington, 109.
99 Shepherd, 255.
101 Higham, 62-63.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid, 83.
The APA welcomed immigrants, Jews, and African-Americans into its ranks. Its willingness to admit African-Americans probably inhibited the spread of the APA in the South. Unlike the Know-Nothings, the APA tried to exert its influence through existing political channels rather than by becoming a third party. It reached its zenith in 1894 but soon thereafter lost strength because of internal disagreements and rivalries.

The Women's American Protective Association (WAPA) became an important adjunct of the APA. It held its annual conventions at the same time and in the same city as the APA. Although officially subordinate to the Supreme Council of the APA, the WAPA, like the Women of the Ku Klux Klan two generations later, bristled at male interference in its affairs. The "Objects of the Order" were to teach patriotism, encourage compulsory education and the separation of church and state, protect the public schools, encourage the government to inspect educational institutions, protect America from ignorant/pauper immigrants, and educate youth for patriotism and purity of the ballot. A woman could join the APA if she believed it was dangerous to appoint Catholics to political and military office, believed American labor should be protected from pauper labor, thought there should be open inspections of private institutions, supported educational qualifications for voting, and believed that women and men should enjoy equal rights.

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104 Jackson, 5.
106 See for example Kinzer 47-48, 184-185.
107 "How to Become a Member of the W.A.P.A. The Examiner (Butte, Montana) 2 November 1895, 8. 
108 Ibid.
The WAPA left behind few organizational records. Fortunately, a member of the State Council of the Michigan Branch of the WAPA donated abridged records of that organization to the Bentley Historical Library of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. A perusal of these records offers insight into the operations and concerns of a nativist women’s sorority.

The State Council of the Michigan Branch of the WAPA held its first organizational meeting in 1893. Seventeen local councils sent delegates to the meeting. Its first order of business was to elect state officers. Carrie Oostdyk, who later became President of the national association, was elected President. After the election of other officers (including a Guard and Sentinel responsible for security) the Michigan State Council reviewed and voted to approve its State Constitution.

The Constitution of the State Council of the Michigan Branch of the W.A.P.A. opens with the following preamble:

It has been found expedient and of the greatest importance to man and womankind to perpetuate those institutions which confer [sic] on them great and essential benefit . . . [We come together] for the more effectual purpose of binding each other in the bonds of one common union by which we will be enabled to ensure a co-operation of action and of providing for the best interests of our order, based as it is on the principals of equality, fraternity, liberty of conscience and reverence for the flag of our Nation and to secure unto ourselves and posterity the more effectually [sic] the blessings which are to be derived from so valuable our institution.109

According to its Constitution, the State Council of the Michigan Branch of the WAPA met only once annually. That left the President, originally Oostdyk, responsible for the day to day functioning of the organization. The President presided over meetings,
granted dispensations and commissions to inferior councils, made committee
appointments, and signed off on all treasury bills. She also gave an address at each
yearly meeting about the previous year’s accomplishments.

Members of the WAPA in Michigan wore badges to identify themselves.
Although never described in detail, the records of the State Council make it clear that its
members relished the ritual associated with their meetings. Members addressed each
other as “Friend.” They professed pride in being members of the organization—yet many
charter members resisted having their charters (complete with membership lists) framed
and hung on walls in public places. The State Council was preoccupied with the
behavior of its membership. After a “fair trial,” members could be expelled from the
organization for “conduct unbecoming a WAPA.” The vast majority of members were
married, although an occasional single woman appears in the records. The women
involved, especially the officers, dedicated a considerable amount of time to the
organization in the form of letter writing, petitioning, and meeting with other people.
Most of them must have been lower-middle or middle-middle class. For, they had the
time and resources to attend these meetings; but they also kept meticulous expense
accounts and routinely asked for per diem travel compensation. The organization seems
to have been continually on the verge of financial failure as its sole source of revenue was
an annual twenty-cent “capitation tax” on each member.

109 Records of the WAPA, Michigan Branch, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 8.
110 Ibid, 39.
111 Ibid, 19.
112 Ibid, 16.
Before leaving office in April 1894, President Oostdyk reviewed the record of the State Council of the Michigan WAPA in its first year. Oostdyk noted that the organization suffered "for want of money" but nevertheless "our efforts to purify the school board [i.e., rid it of Catholics] will long be remembered."113 She encouraged members of the Michigan WAPA to fight for "the freedom for the women of our State." Oostdyk argued that "the enfranchisement of our women is one of the most important before the people of our State today. It is to this end we must work. With this weapon in the hands of our hundreds of brave women, our association’s success would be certain."114 She warned her sisters that they needed to be even more organized because the "enemy" was more organized.115 In spite of the need for greater organization, the women of the Michigan WAPA, no doubt relishing their independence, resisted pressure to unite in one council with the APA.116

When it organized, the WAPA of Michigan boasted 1,327 members. Within a year 312 more women joined the organization. But, in the same period of time 507 members left the order (some willingly, some not) or died. In 1894, its membership role included the names of 1,131 women. By 1895, the Michigan WAPA reported a membership of 666. The decline in membership reflected the harm done by the disintegration of the national APA and (to a lesser extent) the national WAPA. In a vain attempt to recruit new members, the Michigan State Council passed a resolution requesting that the Supreme Council change the qualifications for membership to

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113 Ibid, 22.
114 Ibid, 23.
115 Ibid.
“American citizens” or those who “shall have declared their intentions of becoming so.”

Mrs. Celia Lozee became President of the State Council of the Michigan Branch of the WAPA in 1894. In her 1895 annual address she expressed anger at the men in the organization for their failure to stay united. She bemoaned:

I look around and find our Brothers who have sworn to protect the little red school house and the public treasury forgetful of their vows, going over to this or that political party for a little financial gain, or even aiding or encouraging the enemy for some selfish purpose. I feel appalled and almost wonder that God in his wrath does not smite us for such apathy.\footnote{Ibid, 36.}

She urged women to do what the men had failed to do: “My friends, the present time calls for action, strong, earnest, concentrated action and if our brothers falter, we must show them that as loyal women we will stand true to the course. Let us be more watchful and diligent in our care for our ‘public schools’ for the enemy never sleeps.\footnote{Ibid, 37.} Lozee added, “Do not be discouraged for my friends it may be that the seed sown by us . . . will be the means of great and lasting good to our Nation and our beloved country be released from the chains of superstition and powers which now seem to control our places of trust and honor.”\footnote{Ibid, 40.} Following Lozee’s address, the Committee on Resolutions ended this, the last recorded meeting of the State Council of the Michigan Branch of the WAPA, with the admonition to members to “return to their councils firmly determined to continue to sow the seed of patriotism and loyalty despite the apathy and negligence of some so called W.A.P.A.’s.” The Committee reminded members that “the best result of our work will
obtained by instilling in the plastic minds of our young the sacred principles of true citizenship.\textsuperscript{121}

The nativist movement faltered in the late 1890s. The Loyal Women of American Liberty ceased its operations in 1897 in the aftermath of the demise of the APA and WAPA. The Independent Women Voters continued to function into the Twentieth Century, but lost much of its influence over Boston politics. The economic recovery, the exhilaration of the Spanish-American War, and a series of libel suits against nativist journals contributed to the decline of organized nativism. Beleaguered nativists, however, congratulated themselves on their accomplishments. They had ousted many Catholics from school boards and municipal jobs. They played their part in convincing the government to place restrictions on immigration, establish Indian boarding schools, eliminate appropriations for sectarian institutions, and extend state control over charitable activities. If nativist women failed in their extremist goal of proscribing Catholics from voting, government service, the military, and public school teaching, they succeeded in their progressive goal of converting tens of thousands of Americans to the cause of woman suffrage. By the time nativism as an organized social movement rose again, nativist women had the franchise and had resolved to use it to protect America from un-American peoples and ideas.

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid, 52.
CHAPTER III
PROTECTING OUR AMERICA:
THE WOMEN OF THE KU KLUX KLAN

Old-style Nativism Meets the New

Organized nativists of the Nineteenth Century rarely expressed the racial fears of
intellectuals such as Frances Walker, John Fiske, or Henry Adams. With the exception of
the APA in the West, organized nativists did not focus their attention on the threat
“inferior races” posed to native Anglo-Saxon Americans. They continued to be more
concerned about the “old” immigrants and their descendants than about the “new”
immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe—unless, of course, they were Catholic.
Throughout the Nineteenth Century racism and nativism were two different, albeit
closely linked, ideologies. Organized nativists “proposed to differentiate between ‘real’
and ‘false’ Americans, whether of native or foreign birth.”¹ In the late Nineteenth
Century, immigrants, African-Americans, and Jewish-Americans could join many
nativist organizations provided they upheld “true Americanism.”

In the 1920s anti-Catholic nativism drew hundreds of thousands of Americans
into a social movement for the last time. After 1930, “old-style” nativists—those who
opposed a group of people because of their supposed “un-American” beliefs—focused
their attention on Communists rather than Catholics. Ironically, Catholics joined the anti-
Communist crusade by the thousands. Meanwhile, “new-style” nativists, or patriotic

¹ Knobel, 276.
racists, worried about races and religions that their predecessors had dismissed as
immaterial. The “new-style” nativists identified Americans by their race rather than their
ideals.

The Women of the Ku Klux Klan (WKKK) of the 1920s can be thought of as a
transitional organization that embraced the ideals of both old-style and new-style
nativism. Members of the WKKK, like their nativist predecessors, believed Catholics
posed a mortal threat to the Protestant American Republic, vigorously supported
temperance (now prohibition) and the public schools, and believed that women had a
significant role to play in “saving” their country from ruin. But they lived in a self-
obsessed country made more xenophobic by World War I and the Red Scare. They lived
in a country in which racism had become intellectually respectable. They easily believed
that Americanism meant Anglo-Saxonism and that inferior races posed a mortal threat to
the survival of the White Race and its earthly paradise, the United States of America.

Organization and Growth of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan

The WKKK owed its organization to the establishment of the second Ku Klux
Klan (KKK). William Simmons, an avid supporter of fraternal organizations from
Georgia, founded the second Klan in 1915. The new KKK had more in common with the
fraternal nativist organizations of the late Nineteenth Century than with the postbellum
Klan. Many of the surviving members of the American Protective Association (and,
presumably, the Women’s American Protective Association) joined the new Klan.2 It
languished, however, until the early 1920s when the first significant woman associated

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with it, Elizabeth Tyler, and her lover, Edward Clarke, became the KKK’s public relations team.³ Tyler and Clarke’s Southern Publicity Association took a small regionally based Klan and turned it into a national organization with approximately four million members.⁴

Tyler and Clarke did this by making the Klan a new kind of nativist organization.⁵ They presented the Klan as the only organization in America capable of protecting the country from Catholics, Jews, immigrants, political radicals, and “uppity” Blacks. The new Klan promised to promote the public schools, public morality, Protestantism, Prohibition, and patriotism.

Tyler and Clarke sent “Kleagles” to spread the Klan’s agenda and recruit new members. The Kleagles, who received four dollars for every new member, were phenomenally successful.⁶ They traveled to communities across the country, assessed the particular grievances of native-born White Protestants in those communities, then held meetings emphasizing those particular grievances. They converted numerous Protestant ministers and civic leaders to their cause. The converts heaped praise on the Klan from their pulpits and lecterns, and ensured that potential recruits received invitations to organizational meetings.

³ For a thorough account of the rise and fall of the second Klan, see Kenneth Jackson, The Ku Klux Klan in the City (Oxford University Press, 1967).
Phenomenal growth led to phenomenal wealth and jealousy. Many accused Tyler and Clarke of embezzling Klan funds. Meanwhile, many Klansmen resented Tyler’s leadership role. Disgruntled Klansmen accused Tyler of running the all-male fraternity. Texas Klan leader Hiram Evans, indignant over Tyler’s role, jealous of the cut she and Clarke took out of membership dues, and greedy for power, manipulated Tyler and Clarke (as well as William Simmons himself) out of the organization in 1922.

Meanwhile, several small women’s nativist organizations and unofficial local Klan auxiliaries expressed interest in uniting their resources to become a national organization. Klan leaders, fearing someone else would organize White Protestant women on the national level before they did, agreed that the time was right for women to enter the Invisible Empire. The new Klan, like its nativist predecessors, fancied itself a moral organization and wanted women, the moral leaders, to support it. Moreover, it hoped that newly enfranchised women would vote for Klan-endorsed political candidates and drooled at the prospect of collecting women’s dues.

Evans called for the organization of a woman’s Klan at the Imperial Klonvocation meeting in Atlanta, Georgia in 1922. A committee consisting of representatives from various women’s nativist groups, Klan auxiliaries, and the KKK drew up a plan for a woman’s organization and submitted it for consideration at the Imperial Kloncilium.

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7 Ibid.
8 The most well known of these auxiliaries were the Ladies of the Invisible Empire, better known as the Lotties, and Indiana’s Queens of the Golden Mask. These groups shared the WKKK’s politics, but not its concern for women’s rights.
meeting in Washington, D.C. in June 1923.9 Hundreds of women attended the 
Kloncilium (better known in WKKK lore as the first “National Congress”) to witness the 
birth of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan.10

Simmons hoped to reassert his personal power by forming his own woman’s Klan
before Kloncilium members converged on Washington D.C. In April 1923 he organized 
the Kamelia, with himself serving as its El Magnus.11 Kamelia chapters soon appeared in 
20 states. Its members, sporting the familiar white robes, held parades and meetings 
across the nation.12 Evans responded quickly. He condemned Simmons’ unauthorized 
action and advised members against supporting the rival group.13

Judge R.M. Mann of Little Rock, Arkansas authorized the official charter of the 
Women of Ku Klux Klan. With a charter membership of 125,000, the WKKK opened it 
doors in Little Rock, Arkansas. Little Rock remained the national headquarters of the 
WKKK through the 1920s. The location was significant. On the one hand, the WKKK 
established a measure of independence from the men’s organization headquartered in 
distant Atlanta, Georgia. On the other, the Little Rock WKKK—which already boasted 
2,500 members—had a great deal of influence over the national woman’s Klan.14

Lulu Markwell of Arkansas became the first Imperial Commander of the WKKK. 
Her resume is remarkably similar to Eliza Trask Hill’s, the founder of the Independent

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9 *Women of America: The Past! The Present! The Future!* (Little Rock: Women of the Ku Klux 
Klan, 1923). Available in the Ku Klux Klan Collection of the Michigan State University Library, Lansing, 
MI.

10 Ibid.

11 Jackson 14.

12 Blee 27.

13 Jackson 14-15.

14 Charles C. Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest* (University of Kentucky Press, 1965) 
103.
Women Voters. Markwell, a college graduate and former teacher, actively participated in church and civic affairs. She was the past-president of the Arkansas chapter of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and had been an advocate of women’s suffrage. When she assumed leadership of the organization, the WKKK already boasted 125,000 members. Markwell and her officers intended to expand the organization using their own Kleagles and publications.

To become a member of the WKKK, a woman had to be a native Protestant and receive the endorsement of at least two Klanswomen, a Kleagle, or the Imperial Commander. While it rarely turned away recruits, the WKKK took its membership seriously and carefully investigated prospective members. If found acceptable, a recruit could join the WKKK by paying a $10.00 initiation fee ($5.00 if her husband was a Klansman) which covered the cost of her initial dues, robe, and hood.

The WKKK spread rapidly. In October 1923, Markwell announced that 250,000 women had joined the organization. At its height in the mid-1920s the WKKK probably had a membership of 500,000—making it the largest nativist women’s organization in American history. Chapters operated in at least 36 states. It appears to have been strongest in states where the WAPA was strong: Indiana, Pennsylvania,
Ohio, and Michigan. The group also recruited thousands of members in the Southwest (particularly Oklahoma and Texas), the border-states, and the West.

WKKK Kleagles followed the same practices as those working for the KKK. The WKKK used family/community contacts, newspaper advertisements, and self-published literature to recruit new members. Members of the KKK encouraged their wives and other female relatives to join the women’s organization; many of its charter members and early recruits were related to Klansmen. It should be pointed out, however, that in some cases female Kluxers recruited their husbands into the Invisible Empire. Wyn Craig Wade notes that Klan officials in Indiana credited WKKK wives for the phenomenal growth of the KKK in the Hoosier state.

With the exception of Kathleen Blee, few historians of the Klan have paid attention to the concerns and activities of the WKKK. Whether or not they are predisposed to ignore women’s history, most historians have focused on the men’s organization and have written about the WKKK (if at all) from the perspective of Klansmen. For example, David Bennett writes that the KKK cherished the image of virtuous yet vulnerable females who could conserve national ideals but needed the protection of true American men. The second Klan, according to Bennett, “embraced a sexist ideology of classic dimensions.” One cannot argue with that. But, Bennett goes on to assume that members of the WKKK were merely wives and sisters of men in the

21 Alexander 104 and Blee 30.
22 Ibid. See also Jackson 70.
23 See page 2.
24 Jackson 150.
25 Craig 225.
KKK who performed “customary housewifely chores by preparing food for the numerous Klan outings, picnics, and clambakes.” The WKKK, most of whose members would have proudly admitted to being housewives, would have scoffed at this statement.

The WKKK was more than an auxiliary of the KKK. It enjoyed a measure of independence from the male organization and involved itself in more than the social life of the Invisible Empire. Its members had their own reasons for joining the organization and participating in its political and economic activities. And, they had their own impact on history.

**Motives and Activities**

Are you interested in the welfare of our Nation?  
As an enfranchised woman are you interested in Better Government?  
Do you not wish for the protection of Pure Womanhood?  
Shall we uphold the sanctity of the American Home?  
Should we not interest ourselves in Better Education for our children?  
Do we not want American teachers in our American schools?

If so, “do your patriotic duty” and join the WKKK! Thus read a WKKK broadside. This particular advertisement did not mention the need to protect America from the Pope, but references to the Catholic menace lurk in phrases such as “are you interested in Better Government?” and “Do we not want American teachers in our American schools?” Neither the KKK nor the WKKK were as explicit in their anti-Catholicism as their antebellum and late nineteenth century predecessors were. Rarely do they express fears that the Pope plans to take control of America. Still, hostility to

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27 Ibid, 88.  
28 Quoted in Blee 33.
Catholics seethed at the heart of the Second Klan. Thousands of women presumably joined the WKKK because its anti-Catholic bias mirrored their own.

The literature published by the WKKK betrays the organization’s anti-Catholic bias. “WE BELIEVE that the people are greater than any foreign power or potentate, prince or prelate, and that no other allegiance in America should be tolerated,” wrote the WKKK leadership. Like their predecessors, nativist Klanswomen accused the Catholic Church of being un-American: “Americanism... is a system based on a principle of utter antagonism to monarchism, whether represented by emperor, king, potentate, or pope.” The women of the Klan believed that Catholics were incapable of being loyal citizens. They insisted that true Americans are “independent of all outside sovereignty and control” and owe their complete allegiance to the American government. “No other government, potentate, or person of any kind shall share in this allegiance. We maintain that a divided allegiance means no allegiance.” Members of the WKKK warned that those with divided allegiances come to America “to break down the government under which they find protection while seeking their nefarious ends.” While it is hard to imagine one wanting to, the WKKK announced: “No woman is wanted in this order who does not esteem the GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF

29 Creed of Klanswomen (Little Rock, AR: Women of the Ku Klux Klan, 1923). Available in the Ku Klux Klan Collection at the Michigan State University Library, Lansing, MI.
31 Ibid, 7-8.
32 Ibid, 2.
Like their Nineteenth Century predecessors, nativist Klanswomen decreed that the United States is a Protestant nation and that women should help “reestablish and maintain and proclaim the principles of Protestantism.” This new generation of protectors proclaimed that God had ordered the men and women of the Invisible Empire to preserve the Protestant Republic “until it has accomplished the great mission for which it came into existence.”

Preserving the Protestant Republic meant safeguarding public schools and Prohibition. The WKKK announced that it “stands absolutely and immovably for the advancement and growth of our FREE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM and will always be ready to use its every resource and every effort to maintain it at a high standard of efficiency.” The WKKK told members and potential recruits that:

None shall be allowed to circumscribe the influence and hinder the progress of American institutions on this continent. And this involves the welfare and development of the public school system. To those who seek to undermine or destroy this American institution we say, ‘hands off,’ and we will defend this institution against every enemy, whether it be political or ecclesiastical.

The WKKK warned Catholics that it “is ready with all its strength and resources to oppose efforts of the individual or group who may be interested in causing PUBLIC
SCHOOLS to fail, or who may endeavor to cause them to cease entirely.” The WKKK’s support for public schools proved to be an effective recruiting tool. Many former public school teachers, including Imperial Commander Lulu Markwell, joined the WKKK.

Kathleen Blee, who compiled the biographies of over 100 Klanswomen, found that the most common route to the WKKK was the Women’s Christian Temperance Union. Lulu Markwell had been the President of the Arkansas Chapter of the WCTU. Daisy Douglas Barr, a Quaker preacher and head of the WKKK in Indiana, campaigned for temperance and later became a staunch supporter of Prohibition. Like many Klanswomen, her support for temperance reinforced her anti-Catholicism and led her into the WKKK.

Klanswomen’s support of Prohibition served a triple purpose. First, like their nineteenth century predecessors, Klanswomen feared alcohol’s effects on the family—domestic violence, lost income, missing husbands. Supporting Prohibition therefore became a means to keep families together in a threatening world. Second, support for Prohibition was a mark of middle class status. Like their predecessors, women of the Klan suffered severe status anxiety. Third, upholding Prohibition became a way of proclaiming one’s own superiority and true Americanism. Most women and men who joined the Second Klan lived in small towns that had lost their leadership role in American life. Klanspeople detested everything associated with urban areas—new

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38 *Women of America: The Past! The Present! The Future!*
39 Blee, 29.
40 Blee 103-104.
standards of morality, Jews, African-Americans, Catholic immigrants—and speakeasies. They demonstrated their own self-worth and superiority by supporting Prohibition.

Like their antebellum counterparts, Klanswomen compared themselves to Revolutionary women who “stand out dearly in the history of that time as great Patriots and lovers of their native land.” The WKKK fancied that “our mothers have ever been Klanswomen at heart.” Although they did not use the term, Klanswomen embraced the ideal of Republican Motherhood. Homes and the mothers who tended them were “the foundation upon which rests secure the American Republic, the future of its institutions, and the liberties of its citizens,” announced the WKKK. As was true in antebellum America, this type of rhetoric could be both liberating and stifling. For, according to many Klanswomen, the nation had become the home. The WKKK asserted that it was “the mission of emancipated womanhood” to promote the “equality of men and women” in the “political, religious, fraternal, civic, and social affairs” of the national home.

Women’s mission had become all the more important because men had failed in their’s. Like their predecessors, the women of the Klan ridiculed American men for allowing Catholics and others to influence politics. They believed politics to be corrupt and insisted that “the guilt for this state of affairs” lies with men who “have betrayed their own kind” for votes. “There are those who for a mess of pottage,” complained one

41 Development and Objects of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan, 10.
42 Ibid, 9.
43 Creed of Klanswomen.
44 Ibid.
45 Ideals of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan, 4.
WKKK publication, "would sell their birthright and see their emblem of liberty torn from its sockets and trampled under the feet of the profane."46

The Women of the Ku Klux Klan added African-Americans, Jews, and Southern and Eastern Europeans to the list of those who threatened American institutions. "One of the sad facts in American political life is the readiness of so many politicians . . . to betray their race in order to win a few black votes," lamented a typical WKKK publication.47 The most remarkable difference between Klanswomen and the women nativists of the nineteenth century is the former's belief that to be an American one had to be a native of Anglo-Saxon ancestry. Klanswomen equated Americanism with Anglo-Saxon Protestantism. They equated America's mission with the "mission of the white race."48 Only White (and by White they meant Anglo-Saxon), Protestant women could become members of the WKKK.49 In contrast, nativist women of the late Nineteenth Century believed that to be an American a person—no matter his or her race or country of birth—had to pay allegiance to American ideals. Nineteenth Century nativists allowed any non-Catholic woman who professed allegiance to republican ideals into their organizations.

Although many of them likely believed in it, nativist women of the Nineteenth Century did not make a political issue of White Supremacy. It was, however, a critical

46 America for Americans As Interpreted by the Women of the Ku Klux Klan (Little Rock, AR: Women of the Ku Klux Klan, 1923), 1. Available in the Ku Klux Klan Collection at the Michigan State University Library, Lansing, MI.
47 Ideals of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan, 3.
48 Ibid, 1.
49 America for Americans, 7.
issue to the WKKK. Klanswomen boasted: "We stand for White Supremacy." \(^{50}\) They pledged to do their part to ensure that, "The government of the United States . . . be kept inviolate from the control or domination of alien races and the baleful influence of inferior races." \(^{51}\) They believed that "the perpetuity of our nation rests upon the solidarity and purity of our native-born white, Gentile, Protestant men and women." \(^{52}\) Members of the WKKK insisted that their Revolutionary forefathers and foremothers made the Revolution so that "we, her native-born, might secure political independence, social security, happiness and the improvement of our race . . . It was for us, their descendants, native born Americans, that our noble sires worked . . . The native-born American is the salt of the Earth." \(^{53}\)

Like their foremothers, the Women of the Ku Klux Klan advocated extreme measures to "protect" the nation. They were willing to proscribe Catholics as well as African-Americans, Jews, and other "non-desirables" from voting and holding political office. "WE BELIEVE," announced the WKKK leadership, "that the government of the United States must be kept inviolate from the control or domination of alien races and the baleful influence of inferior peoples." \(^{54}\) While the WKKK vowed to uphold the freedoms of speech, press, and worship of those whose "allegiance and loyalty to our country are unquestioned," \(^{55}\) it reserved for itself the right to determine whose allegiance and loyalty were unquestioned.

\(^{50}\) Ibid, 3. 
\(^{51}\) Creed of Klanswomen. 
\(^{52}\) Ibid. 
\(^{53}\) Ibid, 3. 
\(^{54}\) Creed of Klanswomen. 
\(^{55}\) Ibid.
Women in the Klan resolved that they would use their suffrage rights to protect White Protestant America from dangerous influences. WKKK members vowed to exercise “our citizenship intelligently.”56 They envisioned that their organization “will become an integral part of an irresistible engine that will direct the political energies of the country.”57 They promised to work within the two-party system, but warned that they would form a new party if the established ones failed to “champion great fundamental American principles.”58

True to their word, the women of the WKKK involved themselves in local, state, and national politics. The WKKK reviewed slates of candidates and publicly endorsed those who embraced its agenda. WKKK members went into their communities to promote voter registration and made certain that “right thinkers” made it to the polls. Their activities helped candidates win in such places as Denver, Portland, Indianapolis, Dallas, and Memphis.59 Nationally, they lobbied tirelessly for the establishment of a cabinet level Department of Education and lobbied equally hard against the United States joining the World Court.60

Members of the WKKK vowed to use their suffrage rights to protect American women. Many had joined the WKKK because they believed that white women could collectively secure and advance their rights by joining such an organization.61 One of the most prominent Klanswomen, Alma Bridwell White, joined the WKKK for this

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56 Ideals of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan, 5.
57 Women of the Ku Klux Klan, 4.
58 Ideals of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan, 6.
59 Jackson 18-19, 53.
60 Blee 39.
61 Ibid 72-76.
reason. White blamed Catholicism and Judaism for female subordination and credited Protestantism with liberating American women. White, a divorcee as well as the first female bishop in the United States, actively supported women's rights and maintained that sexual discrimination went against the principles of the New Testament. She doubted Protestant men's dedication to women's rights and encouraged white women to join the WKKK to protect their rights.\textsuperscript{62} She welcomed the WKKK's promise to "make secure the emancipation for which [women] have been struggling from the beginning of time."\textsuperscript{63}

Robbie Gill, the second Imperial Commander of the WKKK, encouraged Klanswomen to organize into effective voting blocs. Klanswomen across the country lobbied for women's rights in the work place, an eight-hour workday for mothers, and more equitable treatment at home.\textsuperscript{64} The KKK did not welcome the WKKK's persistent assertiveness in regards to women's rights. The Klan—which appreciated female voters and dues—felt quite uncomfortable with female autonomy of any kind. The two organizations often clashed over who ultimately controlled the agenda (and finances) of the WKKK.\textsuperscript{65}

The WKKK emphasized the need for women to support one another. Recruiting literature stated that the organization "encourages and requires women to stand by and stick to one another in all things honorable, to do their utmost in helping and supporting a

\textsuperscript{62} For more on Alma Bridwell White see Blee, 72-76.
\textsuperscript{63} Women of the Ku Klux Klan, 3.
\textsuperscript{64} Blee 51.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid 57.
Klanswoman in distress, and helping each individual in her laudable undertakings—thereby demonstrating a real Fraternal spirit.\textsuperscript{66}

Its emphasis on social support proved to be one of the WKKK’s most important recruiting tools.\textsuperscript{67} Unlike their Nineteenth Century predecessors, most members of the WKKK came from rural, small-town America.\textsuperscript{68} They cherished opportunities to do things with like-minded women. The WKKK sponsored a number of women-only events including group sing-a-longs and lectures. Other activities involved the entire family, integrating Klan life into the daily lives of thousands of women. The WKKK hosted weddings, baptisms, and funerals. It held rallies and parades, as well as Bar-B-Qs and weenie roasts. WKKK chapters formed sick committees responsible for visiting ailing members. For thousands of women, the WKKK became a second church.\textsuperscript{69}

And a touchstone Church was something many of these women craved. “Modernism” made them uncomfortable. Members of the WKKK loathed society’s woeful disregard of the Eighteenth Amendment and the new standards of sexual morality. Except when it came to women’s political and economic rights, the WKKK took an active role in the “traditionalist reaction” of the 1920s. Members congratulated themselves on their superior morality and helped the KKK police the morality of others. Female Kluxers provided the KKK with the names of husbands and others who imbibed

\textsuperscript{66} Women of America: The Past! The Present! The Future!
\textsuperscript{67} Blee, 1.
\textsuperscript{69} Blee 164-167.
forbidden liquors.\textsuperscript{70} On more than one occasion, Klanswomen marched to and captured whiskey stills.\textsuperscript{71}

Klanswomen tried, with varied success, to close new dance halls. Occasionally, they joined male Kluxers in actually destroying buildings that allowed youth dancing.\textsuperscript{72} They fretted over (and reported on) youths caught together in cars. Klanswomen used a gossip hotline to inform others about husbands who consorted with "fallen" women or single women who did not live up to Klan standards of sexual purity. They also reported on those who neglected their families. Offenders brought to the Klan's attention received threatening letters, calls, and an occasional violent visit. Although Protestant men—even Klan members—found themselves targeted by crusading Klanswomen, most of those accused of immorality were Catholics, Jews, African-Americans, Klan opponents, and local outcasts.\textsuperscript{73} Men were the usual targets but women who broke the Victorian code with an "inferior type" man received the most sadistic treatment.\textsuperscript{74}

The WKKK's fondness for Victorian morality sprung from more than simple prudishness. Klanswomen were part of a vanishing cohort of women who insisted that women deserved equal political rights because of their moral superiority to men. They, like their antebellum and late Nineteenth Century predecessors, used arguments about woman's moral superiority to justify their actions to their nativist brethren—many of who were instinctively hostile to politically active women. The pedestal may have confined

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid 82.  
\textsuperscript{71} Jackson 85.  
\textsuperscript{72} Blee 85.  
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid 84.  
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid 82-83.
many American women, but it liberated female nativists. They worried about what would happen if women willingly descended the moral high ground.

The WKKK appealed to those interested in traditional benevolent work. The WKKK managed Klan Haven, an orphanage for Protestant children, homes for wayward Protestant girls (lest they be led into a life of vice in Catholic reform schools) and Protestant hospitals. Klanswomen also collected food and money for "worthy" people in need. They delivered Christmas baskets to the poor and regularly presented American flags and Bibles to schools and churches.75 Ever humble Klanswomen never failed to publicize their charitable activities.

A vicious streak coursed through the morally superior, benevolent WKKK. D.C. Stephenson, head of the Indiana Klan, referred to the WKKK as a "poison squad of whispering women."76 The "poison squad" used telephone lines and personal contacts to ruin the reputations of the individuals it chose to attack—brewers, dance hall patrons, school teachers who dated young men with cars. By mounting letter writing campaigns the poison squad succeeded in ridding several school libraries of their Catholic encyclopedias. And, like their Nineteenth Century counterparts, Klanswomen successfully forced Catholics and other "dangerous" teachers out of local school systems.77 The WKKK used boycotts to force offensive Jews, Catholics, and African-Americans out of business. According to Kathleen Blee, "organizing Klanswomen as

75 For more on WKKK charitable activities, see Alexander 105 and Blee 40, 143.
76 Wade 230.
77 Blee 145.
consumers had an immediate and phenomenal effect." In areas where it was strong, a WKKK boycott could doom even the most solid business.

**Case Study: Inside a WKKK Konklave**

Women nativists treasured ceremony and ritual. They found comfort in and gained personal prestige by participating in nativist organizations. Those organizations valued secrecy, however, and little is known about their ceremonies and rituals. Fortunately for scholars, the WKKK published a pamphlet, *Installation Ceremony*, which outlines the procedures for installing new officers in a Konklave or chapter and lists the officers’ duties. This pamphlet provides insight into the internal organization of the WKKK.

According to *Installation Ceremony*, officers-elect of a WKKK Konklave took oaths and received the symbols of their authority before the “sacred altar” of the Konklave. An Excellent Commander presided over meetings and conducted all communication with outside groups, including the men’s Klan. A Klaliff served as a sort of Vice President and preserved order during debates. A Klokard served as chief instructor of the Konklave—and also acted as its chief censor or critic. She gave “Kloranic” lectures, instructed others in the “secret work” of the Klan, made certain that members followed rituals correctly, and disseminated “Klankraft” throughout the local community.

A Kludd served as the chaplain and spiritual supervisor of a Konklave. She also organized the group’s musical programs. The Kligrapp acted as secretary and recording

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78 Ibid 147.
officer of the organization. She received dues, "Imperial Taxes," and donations. She transferred those funds to the Klabee, who served as the actual treasurer and keeper of Klan funds. Three women in each chapter received the title Klokann. The Klokanns served as a kind of Board of Trustees that audited the books of the Kligrapp and Klabee. The Klokanns also ensured that Klan property was properly stored.

A Konklave must have offered an official title to all who wanted one. In addition to the officers listed above, each chapter had a Kladd who retained custody of Klan paraphernalia and inducted new initiates. Before each meeting, WKKK members whispered special passwords and gave special signs to the Kladd. The Klarogo acted as the "Inner Guard" at meetings, letting only qualified members into meeting areas. The Klexter served as the "Outer Guard" who watched the outside door and made periodic rounds to check that no one eavesdropped on Klan meetings. Finally, a Night-Hawk carried the Fiery Cross (both the electric and burning variety) in ceremonies and public exhibitions. She also acted as the special courier of the Excellent Commander.

Decline and Disintegration of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan

The Women of the Ku Klux Klan did not survive the 1920s. Despite their pretensions to moral superiority, Klanswomen were not immune from greed and lust for power. Destructive conflicts over control of funds and patronage occurred on the national, state, and local levels. The most significant national cleavage occurred when Robbie Gill ousted Lulu Markwell as Imperial Commander of the organization. Gill later married Judge Comer, a leader of the Arkansas KKK, and the duo made a fortune off of

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79 Installation Ceremony (Little Rock: Women of the Ku Klux Klan, 1923). Available in the Ku
WKKK funds. Agnes Cloud, Markwell's heir apparent, led those charging that the newlyweds were guilty of waste, extravagance, and misappropriation of funds.\textsuperscript{80}

This and various other power struggles precipitated the break up of the WKKK. In November 1925 both the WKKK and KKK of Little Rock, Arkansas seceded from the Invisible Empire because of the conflict with the Comers.\textsuperscript{81} Internal squabbles with the Comers also split and irrevocably weakened the WKKK in the Southwest.\textsuperscript{82} In Colorado, a WKKK stronghold, the women's Klan suffered because of conflicts within the male Klan. Colorado's Grand Dragon infuriated Hiram Evans by forming (and harvesting funds from) his own women's auxiliary. Men's and women's Konklaves were drawn into the struggle between the national organization and its Colorado branch. By 1926, internal dissension destroyed the WKKK in Colorado.\textsuperscript{83}

In addition to divisive internal conflicts, the WKKK fell apart because the Klan's claim to moral leadership—a claim that won it many converts from mainstream society—disintegrated. D.C. Stephenson's self-destruction in Indiana is but the most notorious immorality tale of the second Klan. Moreover, many Americans did not view threatening, financially attacking, and physically harming "offensive" peoples as particularly moral activities. Without its "moral face" the Klan found it harder to recruit

\textsuperscript{80} Klux Klan Collection at the Michigan State University Library, Lansing, MI.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid. See also Blee 220.
\textsuperscript{82} Jackson 83.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid 123.
and retain members. Between 1929-1930 the national organizations completely
dissipated.84

Even without internal struggles and moral blemishes, the Women of the Ku Klux
Klan likely would have disintegrated. The WKKK bridged the gap between old-style
anti-Catholic nativism and racist Anglo-Saxon patriotism. By the 1930s many of the
triggers of old-style nativism—mass immigration, appropriating public funds for
parochial schools and church-related charities, temperance/prohibition agitation,
women's political rights agitation—had faded from public view. The public focused its
attention on the grating economic misery that afflicted Americans of all religious and
ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, secularization had triumphed in America and it became
harder to convince masses of people that the Pope would or could try to seize control of
the United States. Old-style nativism would never rise again.

84 Blee 175.
CONCLUSION

Women played an important role in organizing and maintaining nativist organizations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Antebellum, postbellum, and Second Klan nativist women participated in nativist sororities for a variety of reasons. Women from each period expressed a visceral anti-Catholicism that one rarely encounters today. They lived in a far less secularized society, one in which otherwise reasonable people could sincerely believe that the Pope plotted to deprive Americans of their liberties. Nativist women demonstrated great faith that public schools could secure the (Protestant) future of the Republic and offer their children a means to advance in an increasingly stratified society. In an era of increasing school (and later full) suffrage, nativist women felt justified in entering the political arena to “save” their schools. They supported temperance and Prohibition because the anti-alcohol campaign promised to improve family life and protect their middle class status. Opposing alcohol consumption also offered nativist women a means to differentiate themselves from Catholic immigrants and the burgeoning Catholic middle class.

Anti-Catholicism, promotion of public schools and support for temperance only partially explain why women were drawn to America nativism. Many non-nativist women supported these things. The “glue” that holds nativist women together must be found elsewhere. The nativist mindset—essentially a willingness to believe that any setback experienced by an individual or society is due to some sinister conspiracy—is part of that glue. But people of this mindset lurk in all corners of American history while
mass organized anti-Catholic nativism only appeared three times between 1830-1930. During each of those times the United States found itself suffering through extensive socio-economic change. Those negatively impacted or distressed by structural change who were also predisposed to anti-Catholicism and other nativist markers flocked to nativist sororities and fraternities. They found succor and security in anti-Catholic nativism. They could blame the Pope rather than themselves or their beloved America for the downward social mobility experienced by native artisans in antebellum America. Third generation Catholics and new immigrants could be blamed for decreasing worker autonomy and the inability of small business to compete in late nineteenth century corporate America. In the 1920s rural, small town Americans could blame their declining influence on the Catholics, Jews, and African-Americans who masterminded the rise of urban America.

Nativist women can be thought of as progressive reformers who supported reactionary measures to shore up their position in society. Their blend of progressivism and intolerance had important repercussions. The most vocal nativist women were sincerely committed to advancing women’s rights. They had surprising success in moving woman out of her “proper sphere” because they used conservative rhetoric to justify each move. Antebellum women nativists used the rhetoric of Republican Motherhood to convince many otherwise hostile listeners that women should have a voice in the affairs of the nation. Benefiting from the groundwork laid by women like Anna Ella Carroll and Harriet Probasco, postbellum nativist women argued that women should have full suffrage rights. Eliza Trask Hill and Margaret Shepherd convinced
many otherwise conservative men, including hundreds of influential Protestant clergy, that woman suffrage would protect America from undesirable influences. Women's participation in Boston school politics convinced more than a few Protestant suffrage opponents to change their views.

It also, of course, led to the association of women suffrage and anti-Catholicism, at least in the minds of many Catholics. That association helps explain why otherwise progressive New England lagged behind much of the rest of the country in adopting woman suffrage. In the end it is unclear if women nativists hastened or impeded the adoption of woman suffrage in the United States.

It is very clear, however, that they had an impact on the suffrage issue. Suffragists and nativist women (often one and the same) used racist and nativist appeals to get the American public to endorse woman suffrage. Those appeals converted many—and left behind a bitter legacy of injustice and crass stereotypes. The nativist/racist origin of American women's political rights made it difficult for women of diverse colors and religions to first identify and then work toward common goals in the twentieth century.

In addition to influencing the broad sweep of American history, nativist women affected local communities in many ways. They offered a degree of economic security, in the form of unemployment insurance, to working women. They successfully lobbied for the adoption of temperance laws and later Prohibition. They voted for candidates who favored immigration restriction and a federal naturalization law. Nativist women played no small role in convincing state and federal government agencies to withdraw public funds from Catholic schools, hospitals, reformatories, and charities. They played a
key role in removing Catholics from public office and the public schools in various communities. By the 1920s, as organized consumers, they had the power to destroy private businesses. Nativist women may not be the most attractive women in American history—certainly not the most heroic—but their impact was important nonetheless. Their beliefs, agendas, and accomplishments constitute an important part of American, especially American women’s, history.

Anti-Catholic nativism proved capable of creating mass movements of hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people. After the demise of the Second Klan, however, traditional anti-Catholic nativism lost its organizing potential. Decreased immigration, increasing secularization, and the horrors of the Holocaust robbed anti-Catholicism of its intellectual respectability. The economic affluence of post-war America removed many of the economic anxieties lurking in the heart of old-style nativism. But the nativist mindset persisted. American super-patriots remained willing to subvert their beloved Constitution to defeat their enemies. Those who might have joined the American Party of the 1850s or the Independent Women Voters of the 1890s became involved in either the anti-Communist crusade or, less often, the Radical Right. Communists replaced Catholics in the post-war lexicon of enemies of American ideals. Anti-Communists, rather than anti-Catholics, professed to be on the front lines of a pseudo-religious war to save America. American women and men of diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds believed that Communist enemies plotted to overthrow America and enslave its citizens. Ironically, Catholics often led the new nativist charge.
But not even a massive Communist conspiracy could explain away the upheavals of the 1960s and early 1970s, or the apparent decline in national power that followed. Extreme nativists needed to uncover additional enemies and conspiracies. Splinter groups of the WKKK and KKK as well as the fledgling American Nazi Party helped them do just that. The Klan lost its nativist character after the 1920s. Always racist, it became increasingly anti-Semitic and anti-liberal during the Depression. The Klan and other right-wing extremist groups insisted that satanic forces led by Jews and racial minorities wanted to rob White Americans of their God-given rights and patrimony. Those satanic forces had supposedly seized control of the federal government and were covertly working to enslave Whites, especially White men. As the Cold War waned and anti-Communism lost some of its magnetism, many of its most dedicated adherents flocked to the Klan, militias, and other groups on the Radical Right. Those groups welcomed former Red-baiters who felt displaced in a changing society and needed someone to blame for their unease.

The Radical Right, unlike its anti-Catholic and anti-Communist predecessors, cannot be considered a mass social movement. Its adherents number in the tens of thousands—not the hundreds of thousands or the millions. The Militia Movement seemed to have the potential to grow into a mass organization in the early 1990s but economic prosperity and the public outcry over the Oklahoma City Bombing sapped its

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1 The Radical Right should not be confused with the New Right—which certainly can be considered a mass movement. The Christian Coalition, perhaps the most powerful organization of the New Right, has a mass following. Many of its members were McCarthyites. But, the organization does not explicitly advocate undemocratic means to achieve its ends and is therefore not considered an extremist or “radical” group.
strength. In addition, hard core Militia members espoused a racist Christian theology that did not play well in Middle America.

But perhaps the most important reason why the Radical Right remains on the fringes of American life is its failure to advocate any progressive reforms. Traditional nativism had a dual character that appealed to many. Today’s movement attracts few men and even fewer women because it offers hate and nothing else. Moreover it advocates a very traditional, passive role for women that inhibits its ability to recruit otherwise racist women.

Racist women have joined the Radical Right, however, including a fair number of feminists. Like their male counterparts, racist women host a number of sites on the Internet. In addition to the standard condemnations of Jews, minorities, and the federal government, these female-hosted sites spend a considerable amount of time debating women’s role in the Aryan Movement. While they all agree that women have an important role to play in the movement, racist women disagree about how best to fulfill that role. Some feel that the most important thing women can do is have White babies and take care of domestic tasks. Others believe that women should play a more active, political role in the movement. Instead of blaming Catholics, they blame Jews for women’s subordination. They have adjusted the arguments posed by nineteenth and early twentieth century women nativists to advance their agenda. On the Her Race website one contributor, a female medical student, wrote:

Nature intended that women use their brains to advance their race... For comrades to suggest that women squelch this natural instinct by solely being a house-wife, they are acting unAryan and clearly violating laws of Nature. I mean look at the Talmud—the Jews are the ones who advocated treating women as
breeding tools and property. How dare NS comrades stoop to the level of Jews in such a manner.  

Women on the Radical Right, like their predecessors, insist that it is “our duty” to secure “our rights” and protect “our America.”

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