American workers in the nineteenth century engaged in economic conflicts with their employers as fierce as any known to the industrial world, yet in their political behavior they consistently failed to exhibit a class-consciousness. This paradox was evident as early as 1844, when nativist parties triumphed at the polls in Philadelphia, Boston and New York. At the close of a decade and a half of hotly-contested strikes and severe economic hardship, climaxed by the bitter depression of 1837-43, working-men had divided their votes along ethnic lines. The greater part of them were swept up into an enthusiastic political movement whose negative reference group was not the capitalists, but Roman Catholics. Other workers found their enemy in evangelical Protestantism.

Analysis of the nativist movement and of the bloody riots it spawned in the Philadelphia area suggests that the political behavior of American workingmen in the 1840s was fashioned not so much by the economic impact of industrialization as by the workers’ reactions to the political demands made by evangelical Protestantism: the moral content of education, liquor licensing and prohibition, Sabbath closing and the suppression of popular “lewd and tumultuous” conduct. Such moral policing as evangelists demanded was in turn urgently needed by the new industrialists, to be sure, for it promised them a disciplined labor force, pacing its toil and its very life cycle to the requirements of the machine and the clock, respectful of property and orderly in its demeanor.¹ Because the responses of various groups of workers to these evangelical issues were determined by their religious outlooks,

¹ Professor Montgomery is in the history department of the University of Pittsburgh. The research for this study was assisted by a grant awarded by the Committee on Faculty Grants of the Social Science Research Council.
rather than their economic conditions, however, the working classes were fragmented on election day. Class interests were most clearly evident in trade union activity and in tensions within the political parties over questions like the legal ten hour day. Such issues, rising directly from the economic impact of industrialization, set working class against middle class. The pattern of cultural politics generated by the religious impact of industrialization, on the other hand, attached workers to the political leadership of the middle classes of their particular ethnic groups.

The counterpoint of class and ethnic conflict in working-class life was clearly visible in Kensington, a manufacturing suburb of Philadelphia, where crowds of Irishmen and native Americans battled each other for four days in May 1844. While the city proper contained some of the most advanced iron rolling mills, machine shops and locomotive works in the country, only 54 percent of its 16,600 working adults were listed in manufacturing and trades by the census of 1840. Commerce, navigation and the learned professions absorbed the rest. By way of contrast, in Kensington 89 percent of the labor force of slightly under 3,000 people was classified in manufacturing and trades. Few really wealthy men lived there. The richest residents were master weavers, shoemakers, victuallers, gunsmiths and ship builders, whose holdings census takers in 1850 assessed mostly between $2,000 and $10,000. By the Delaware River waterfront one could find the old Pennsylvania Wainwright family, lumber dealers and co-owners of two large piers. Jonathan Wainwright’s real estate holdings valued at $20,000 in 1850 were remarkably large for Kensington, yet his wealth was surpassed by that of the acknowledged leader of the Catholic community, boss weaver Hugh Clark. Michael Keenan, another Catholic master weaver, whose houses were burned by rioters in 1844, estimated his real estate at $18,000 in 1850. Only the most prosperous of the Vandusens, a large clan of lumber merchants, ship builders and ship carpenters who helped lead the Protestant cause, approached this level of wealth.

This was a community of working men and women, and among them that division of labor which Adam Smith termed the mainspring of economic growth was evident in profusion. Interspersed with the larger occupational categories were solitary cloth measurers, artificial limb makers, tooth manufacturers, bird
stuffers, lime burners and saw handle makers, not to mention two perfumers, a drum maker and a "comedean." More important, the major occupations encompassed superior craftsmen whose style of work had changed little since the eighteenth century (butchers, cabinet makers, ship carpenters), some factory operatives (in metals and glass works), swarms of outworkers (weaving, tailoring and shoemaking) and the inevitable impoverished laborers, carters, draymen and boatmen.

With the notable exception of the weavers, most of the workmen had been born in the United States. In fact, the manuscript census returns of 1850, the first to record age, occupation and birthplace for each individual, indicate that most were native Pennsylvanians. In contrast to the heavily immigrant weaving areas, concentrated in the second and fifth wards of 1844, the waterfront first, third and fourth wards with their vast tracts of lumberyards, furniture shops, shipbuilding facilities and fishermen's wharves were the special domain of the natives. Alongside only five Englishmen and four Irishmen who worked in shipyard trades could be found 433 Americans. Many of their neighbors on the Delaware's shore worked at one of the two paternalistically managed glass works, where more than 70 percent of the employees were native born.5 Not only were 92 of the 103 fishermen Pennsylvanian by birth, but they shared among themselves only a handful of family names.

Shoemaking, one of Kensington's largest occupations in 1850, involved 343 natives, 128 Germans, 70 Irishmen, 19 Englishmen, 3 Frenchmen, 2 Scots and a Dutchman. In the newer metal trades of the same area—machinists, boiler makers, molders and rolling mill hands—more than half were Pennsylvanians, and 63 percent were Americans, though numerous Englishmen were to be found in their ranks. Among tailors, on the other hand, German immigrants were preponderant; and in the ranks of cabinet makers Germans almost equalled the natives in number. At the bottom of the occupational ladder, the laborers included 405 Irishmen, 99 Germans and 205 natives.6

Among the wage earners were many young recent arrivals in Kensington. The town's population almost doubled between 1840 and 1850, on top of an increase of 88 percent during the twenties and 66 percent in the thirties.7 Many of the residents lived in
boardinghouses, kept mostly by widows or by workingmen's wives. In the home of a New York-born bootmaker dwelt three young families (his own and those of two youthful locally born machinists) and no fewer than four other machinists, one pattern maker, two blacksmiths, two iron molders and a stray cigar maker. All the boarders were Americans in their twenties, except for a molder and a machinist from England. An inn, not far from this menagerie of metallurists, bore a more cosmopolitan aspect. In addition to the owner's family, it housed an Irish hostler and his 18-year-old wife, an English bartender and his blacksmith compatriot, a painter, a ship carpenter, an accountant, a house carpenter and a cordwainer—all from Pennsylvania—a ship carpenter and a ship joiner from New York state, another ship carpenter from Vermont, and a house carpenter who had come up from Maryland.

Kensington's main industry was weaving, both cotton cloth and, to a lesser extent, woolen. Its output, combined with that of other suburbs like Manayunk and Moyamensing, helped keep Philadelphia County the leading textile producing region of the country down to the Civil War. After the city of Philadelphia had absorbed these suburbs by the consolidation act of 1854, it boasted 260 separate cotton and woolen factories which was more, its champions claimed, than any other city in the world. But most of its weaving was not carried on in these factories. Weaving was basically a cottage industry, based on the putting-out system and the use of handlooms. As early as 1827 the local Society of Weavers boasted, probably with some exaggeration, that 104 warping mills in the region supplied about 4,500 weavers. On the eve of the Civil War Edwin Freedley estimated that 6,000 handloom frames were in use in the county.

Kensington alone had 2,238 weavers when the 1850 census was taken. During the preceding decade some rooms used for cloth weaving and more of those used for carpet weaving had "assumed more of a 'factory' air, and a few really important establishments [had begun] their career." Some large manufacturers put out yarn to as many as 100 weavers each, while many more supplied but half a dozen cottages. Spools of yarn for the journeymen's shuttles were wound either by their own families or by women and children employed by the master. In that case the master
passed on the cost of winding to the journeyman at a rate of 75 cents a week, a rate which remained quite constant from the 1820s through the 1840s. For the most part as Edwin T. Freedley observed, "the persons engaged in the production have no practical concern with the ten-hour system, or the factory system, or even with the solar system. They work at such hours as they choose in their own homes, and their industry is mainly regulated by the state of the larder." A starker description by the contemporary novelist, George Lippard, suggested perhaps luridly, but nonetheless accurately, that the "state of the larder" was usually far from good: "Here we behold a house of time-worn brick, there a toppling frame; on every side the crash of looms, urged by weary hands even at this hour, disturbs the silence of the night."

The neighborhood Lippard described surrounded the Nanny Goat Market, storm center of the great riots of 1844. In that neighborhood the census takers of 1850 confirmed the literary images of Lippard and Freedley. They found, for example, an Irish-born master weaver, Alexander Myers, living with his American wife and three small children, as well as a laborer and his wife who performed domestic service. Six Irish weavers with their families tenanted the surrounding buildings. The whole complex was valued at some $3,000. Not far off lived Jacob Hopes, who similarly had come from Ireland early in the 1830s, married an American woman and now boarded seven single men, all weavers and presumably his journeymen. John Lavery, another boss weaver, had lost in the 1844 riots a $2,000 establishment described by a metropolitan newspaper as "a large and handsome brick house with brick back buildings." The journeyman weaver, whose $150 two-story frame house next door was also wrecked, was a tenant as were the weaver residents of the next eight houses burned down the street.

As these few example suggest, both masters and workmen in the weaving business were predominantly Irish. In fact, 78 percent of the weavers were of Irish birth. In wards three and six (of 1850), where 70 percent of the town's weavers dwelt, 85 percent of them were Irish. The 5 percent who were born in America and the 9 percent born in England seem to have been largely children of Irish immigrants. The ages of the weavers' oldest children born
in the United States indicate that the parents came to Kensington in two great waves, one about 1828-33 and the second in the latter half of the forties, after the riot of 1844.21

Although the immigrant weavers seem to have been predominately Roman Catholic, there was a significant Protestant minority among them. The precise division cannot be known because the census takers specified the religion of no one but clergymen. Just to the east of Second Street, the north-south axis of the weaving district, lived many Irish weavers with such names as Montgomery, Campbell, McTaige and Stewart. Though it is always dubious to guess an Irishman’s faith by his family name, firmer evidence of Protestantism lies in the presence among these weavers of a Presbyterian minister, a Methodist minister and an Irish-born agent of the American Tract Society. One Presbyterian preacher shared the home of an Irish boss weaver, William Wallace. Two Catholic priests, presumably serving the large St. Michael’s Church, were their close neighbors.22 In a word, Catholics and Protestants were found in almost random dispersal among both boss and journeyman weavers, but almost all were Irish. Their ethnic cohesiveness was epitomized by the case of Bernard Sherry, a master weaver who lost one frame and three brick houses inhabited by his journeymen during the riot. After his buildings had been burned, Sherry was arrested on charges of having armed his workmen to defend them against the nativists.23

The ethnic cohesiveness of the weaving community did not preclude sharp economic conflict within it. From the end of the 1820s through the 1840s, the weavers fought a running battle against the constantly recurring efforts of their countrymen-masters to reduce piece rates. When times were hard, as they were in 1833-34 or in 1837, or desperate as they were from 1839 to 1843, the masters claimed the fierce competition of the market compelled them to lower prices for weaving. When times were good, as in the flourishing years of 1835-36, the same masters argued that the high price of cotton threatened to wipe out profits if production costs did not fall. The dilemma of American hand weavers was precisely what Frederick Engels described in England at the same time: “One class of woven goods after another is annexed by the power-loom, and hand-weaving is the last refuge of workers thrown out of employment in other branches, so that the
trade is always overcrowded.”2,4 Well might the Royal Commission on Handloom Weavers of 1838 warn British workers “to flee from the trade, and to beware of leading their children into it, as they would beware of the commission of the most atrocious of crimes.”2,5 But the supply of weavers stubbornly refused to fall. From the manufacturing towns of Yorkshire to the banks of the Delaware River, the rural poverty of Ireland kept the weaving cottages full from the late 1820s onward.2,6

In 1827 an English emigrant warned weavers of Yorkshire not to expect to improve their lot by coming to America. In Philadelphia, he wrote, a “smart weaver . . . by a fair week’s work of 12 hours per day” would do well to acquire gross earnings of $4.50 a week. Some did no better than $4.00.2,7 A press statement of master weavers the same year claimed $5.00 as a weekly average for journeymen.2,8 There seemed general agreement throughout this period that 100 yards of three shuttle gingham was something of a standard week’s work, 120 yards the fruit of an extremely intensive week’s application. From the late twenties through the mid-thirties, prices paid to journeymen hovered around 4 cents a yard for this rather common style of cloth. If a weaver had a family, their work at spooling could save the journeyman a charge of 75 cents weekly and possibly, with enough children, earn a pittance more for the household by winding spools for the use of other journeymen who had no children. Customarily part of the worker’s pay was given in store goods rather than cash.

Wages were fixed by agreements negotiated each spring and fall between the manufacturers and a committee representing the weavers. Kensington and Moyamensing rates were governed by separate but usually similar scales at least from the mid-1830s on.2,9 Often the agreements were reached only after severe strikes, and during the 1830s these conflicts brought the weavers into affiliation with the General Trades’ Union of the City and County of Philadelphia, an assembly of delegates from all the organized trades of the area. During the weavers’ strike in the fall of 1836 their societies received $1,500 in aid from the Trades’ Union.3,0 In turn the weavers contributed one of the most prominent leaders of the local workers’ movement, John Ferral. To accommodate both immigrants and the native American craftsmen the Trades’ Union
banned from its midst all "party, political, or religious sectarian" questions. "The followers of Christ acknowledge a time for all things," explained the American-born saddler John Crossin on behalf of the 'Trades' Union, and "we do the same."31

As the depression of 1839-43 deepened, weavers' strikes became increasingly violent. The basic gingham scale (which was used as the yardstick throughout this discussion) was cut to 3 cents a yard in 1841, yet scabs were available in abundance especially from the most recent immigrants. From August of 1842 until January of the next year Kensington weavers refused to work at the fall scale offered by their employers. When some workers broke ranks, stalwarts staged parades of 150 to 500 participants through the streets, entered the houses of non-strikers and hurled their unfinished chains into bonfires in the streets. Early in November they dispersed a meeting of their masters by threatening to tear down the house where it was taking place, and two months later a sheriff's posse attempting to arrest some strikers was routed by a charge of over 400 weavers armed with muskets and brickbats. Three military companies arrived during the night, and in their presence the workers and masters reached agreement on a scale which left hundreds of families living on less than three dollars a week.32

A strike in the spring of 1843 won a small raise, which was celebrated by a massive unity parade of Kensington and Moyamensing weavers.33 That August improving market conditions, optimism over the new tariff and a very effective one-month strike allowed the Kensington weavers to negotiate an enormous raise—to 5¼ cents a yard for the standard gingham. When three of the largest employers refused to accede to the new scale and demanded that other masters support them in continuing to resist, the employers' conference broke up in a brawl.34 As the early glimmerings of returning prosperity shone over the land, the weavers' incomes actually moved upwards.

The trend did not last long. The following May saw the Kensington weaving district gutted by nativist rioters. Ten days after the disturbance, the handloom weavers' committee announced that a number of manufacturers, "willing to take advantage of the then existing circumstances to enrich themselves," had reduced "our wages at a time when it is uncalled for
by the markets” and when journeymen could not respond because the authorities had banned all meetings. The committee spoke the truth. The basic gingham price had been slashed from 5¼ cents a yard back to 3¼ cents.35

The key to the weavers’ downfall lay in the fact that no longer did they enjoy the support of the other workmen of Philadelphia. Quite the contrary; the final defeat had come in the wake of actual physical assault by other workers, for the most part native-born Protestant artisans. The central problem for this study, therefore, is to explain the rift between the weavers and their fellow workmen of Philadelphia County.

During the 1830s all groups of Philadelphia workmen—Protestant and Catholic, native and immigrant, superior craftsmen, outworkers, factory operatives and laborers—had been caught up in an awakening of class solidarity as significant as any in American history. The formation of the General Trades’ Union, which included delegates from some 50 organized trade societies by 1836, and the successful general strike for the ten-hour day in 1835 epitomized this movement.36 With revenues of $400 to $500 a month from its constituent unions, the Trades’ Union could boast early in 1836: “Within the last six months more than one half of the Societies in the Union have struck, and no instance is known where a Society has struck, under the sanction of the Union, and failed in that strike.”37 Most significant of all, these successful strikes were conducted by workers who ranged in status from laborers and factory operatives at one end of the scale to bookbinders and jewelers at the other. Even journeymen cabinet makers (whose primary concerns were to collect debts due them from merchants and to halt competition from auction sales) and butchers and victuallers (struggling to hold down stall rent charged by the city and impede the “shaving” practices of cattle dealers) participated in the Trades’ Union.38

From the ranks of these diverse groups, the Trades’ Union could summon up what a local paper called “one of the largest meetings ever held in this city,” conducted “with strict order and propriety” to protest the conviction of striking coal heavers, who were among the poorest but also the most militant of the city’s working people. The rally demanded the defeat of Mayor John Swift for “the false imprisonment and unconstitutional bail [he]
demanded of the Schuylkill laborers... whose only crime consisted in asking 25 cents per day addition to former wages."

Many prominent workingmen plunged into the county's political struggles, for the most part supporting the anti-bank wing of the Democratic Party. Ferral of the weavers, Benjamin Sewell the tanner, William Thompson the carpenter, William English, William Gilmore and Samuel Thompson, all shoemakers, and Edward A. Penniman and Joshua Fletcher of the coachmakers were but some of the Trades' Union leaders who promoted Henry A. Muhlenberg's gubernatorial campaign as an anti-monopoly Democrat, sent their champion Lemuel Paynter to Congress from the Southwark area (the manufacturing suburb to the south of Philadelphia which was the birthplace of the artisans' movement), and helped maintain a consistent Democratic majority of almost two to one in Kensington elections. After the depression struck, they organized mass rallies to support President Van Buren's Independent Treasury scheme, demand resumption of specie payments and suppression of "shin plaster" small notes by banks and dispatched committees to visit each of the city's banks with these demands. Ferral proudly boasted to Senator James Buchanan that "the working classes" had frustrated the efforts of pro-bank "shin plaster democrats" to dominate the local party. He concluded that "all is well with the bone and sinew" who had rededicated the Democratic organization to the "emancipation of our Country from the bondage in which it is at present held by chartered Monopolists."

At the very time Ferral wrote, however, the impact of the depression was relentlessly undermining the working-class cohesiveness which the Trades' Union had built up on both the economic and political fronts. As a prominent Philadelphian confided to his diary in the summer of 1842: "The streets seem deserted, the largest houses are shut up and to rent, there is no business, there is no money, no confidence & little hope, property is sold every day by the sheriff at a 4th of the estimated value of a few years ago, nobody can pay debts, the miseries of poverty are felt by both rich & poor...." In this setting most trade societies collapsed, and the General Trades' Union disintegrated with the evaporation of its once munificent treasury.

With the demise of the Trades' Union, Philadelphia lacked any
institutions uniting the Catholic weaver, the Methodist shoemaker and the Presbyterian ship carpenter as members of a common working class. Strikes became as uncommon as they were hopeless, except among the handloom weavers. Artisan struggles of other types excited the county. In the spring of 1839, for example, the butchers waged a brilliantly executed campaign against "shaver" cattle dealers. Through great public fanfare they enlisted the support of their impoverished customers behind the butchers' concerted refusal to pay more than 10 cents a hundredweight for live cattle. The next year shoemakers set up a committee to aid their Boston counterparts then being prosecuted in the famous case of Commonwealth v. Hunt.

From August to October 1842, a Workingmen's Convention met weekly, organized ward clubs and staged street meetings throughout the county to protest unemployment and "to guard their more indigent brethren against the inclemencies of the coming winter." An Equal Rights Party which was launched by the movement, however, failed abysmally at the polls.

When prominent mechanics convened a series of meetings during January and February of 1839 in an effort to revive their trades movement, laborers, factory operatives and even the struggling weavers were conspicuously absent. An address signed by well known spokesmen of the coach makers, shoemakers, painters, bricklayers, tailors, cabinet makers and others blamed the economic crisis on "corrupt legislation," stressed the theme of self-help and made its chief demand "a system of education which shall teach every child in the Commonwealth his duty and interests as a citizen and freeman." It argued that "the old system of pecuniary benefits through the assistance of Trades' Unions seems to have fallen into disrepute" and criticized the "old Union" for "indiscriminate association of all the Trades without any regard to their assimilation or affinity."

It was precisely by making strikes futile, destroying the Trades' Union beyond even hope of resurrection and stimulating this new emphasis on self-improvement that the depression opened the way for the rise of nativism among the artisans. By magnifying the importance to artisans of the temperance and public education movements, these developments set their aspirations on a collision course with those of Catholic immigrants.
The temperance movement paved the way. Like the stress on education, it involved nothing new to artisan culture. In his eloquent pleas for working-class unity at the founding of the Mechanics Union of Trade Associations in 1827, William Heighton had implored his fellow craftsmen to put aside their “drinking, gaming, and frolicking,” and devote themselves to self-education. Almost 40 years before that a commentator describing the gathering of 17,000 Philadelphians, proudly arrayed by trades to celebrate the newly-adopted federal constitution, had attributed their orderliness to their drinking nothing but “American Beer and Cyder,” and admonished his readers to “despise SPIRITOUS LIQUORS, as Anti-Federal, and to consider them as companions to all those vices, that are calculated to dishonor and enslave our country."

The depression cast this traditional artisan virtue in a new light. The hard times made temperance societies with middle-class evangelical leadership ubiquitous in the manufacturing districts, infused a new sense of crusading militancy into their ranks and made them an integral part of artisan life. When the Journeymen House Carpenters prepared their futile strike for a wage increase in March 1839, they appealed publicly for help from the “friends of temperance,” arguing that under current wages carpenters “are frequently driven by poverty and care to intemperance, to dispel for a season, the horrid gloom which envelopes their homes,” thereby “encompassing their families with misery.” The Temperance Society responded with a public letter endorsing the carpenters’ demands and calling upon them to make total abstinence a condition of membership in their society. By 1842-43 the temperance societies in almost every ward were supplemented by others organized on trade lines, like the Cordwainers’ Beneficial Temperance Association. A new labor-for-labor exchange, The First Co-operative Labor Association of Philadelphia, met in a city temperance house.

In 1838 the movement acquired a new leader of increasing prominence named Lewis C. Levin. This Charleston-born lawyer, described by Alexander McClure as “one of the most brilliant and unscrupulous orators I have ever heard,” both lectured for the cause and edited the Temperance Advocate. In January 1842, he attracted attention to a new temperance society in the waterfront woodworking district of Kensington, which then had
only 15 members, by staging a spectacular bonfire of booze obtained from a converted saloon keeper before the eyes of thousands of spectators. Gathering as much of his audience as would fit into a nearby church, he blamed drunkenness on “the prodigality of the mushroom aristocracy of the country,” appealed to the “steady habits of old times” and demanded that the public be allowed to vote on whether taverns should be tolerated in neighborhoods.⁵ ⁴

It was this demand for popular control of liquor licensing which brought the temperance movement with its new evangelical leadership and artisan base into the political arena.⁵ ⁵ There its impact blended with that of an even more emotionally-charged controversy over reading the Bible in the common schools.

There is no end of irony in the Bible-reading issue, and most of it stems from the fact that two very divergent groups had been involved in the struggle for free public education in Philadelphia in the 1820s and 1830s. One group was the artisans, starting with those involved in the Mechanics’ Union of Trade Associations, founded in 1827 with the quest for “equal education” one of its foremost goals. “The original element of despotism,” argued one of its reports, “is a MONOPOLY OF TALENT.” The republican alternative, it contended, was the extension of the same education to all citizens “as a matter of right.”⁵ ⁶ This theme was repeated at the 1836 Trades’ Union mass meeting in defense of the coal heavers. Resolutions adopted there denounced government grants “to colleges, academies and seminaries, where the children of the wealthy alone are taught, that they may move in the same sphere of life as their parents,” while “our children are destined to hereditary bondage, in consequence of the prevailing ignorance of the poorer classes.”⁵ ⁷ Similarly the artisans’ convention of 1839 demanded a “levelling system. . . of education,” in the belief that “intelligence is a passport everywhere.”⁵ ⁸ That artisan devotion to education was not simply rhetorical is suggested by a list of the students admitted from the city’s common schools to its select Central High School in 1844. Of the 90 students admitted that year, 37 were sons of artisans and four were sons of laborers. Together they almost equalled in number the children of merchants, manufacturers and professional men admitted. Not one weaver’s child was on the list.⁵ ⁹

The other, and ultimately more effective promoter of free
public education, was a band of paternalistic merchants and professional men, largely old Federalists, led by Roberts Vaux and Samuel Breck. These men spoke not of “levelling education” to emancipate the working man, but of “universal education” as “a powerful check on vice,” to use the words of Governor Wolf’s message in support of the Public School Bill which became law in 1834.60

Prominent evangelists endorsed this effort. Albert Barnes, the “New School” leader of Philadelphia’s First Presbyterian Church, took a comprehensive view of the problem when he warned that “the lower stratum of society... that dense and dark mass, the population of alleys and cellars, and garrets—the ignorant, the degraded, the grossly sensual, the idle, the worthless—the refuse of society... are not in a condition where revivals of religion can be expected such as I am advocating.” The remedy, he suggested, was to elevate “that dark mass” by closing the city’s “fountains of poison,” placing the Bible in the homes of the poor, providing them “self-denying instruction,” and ensuring that “these hordes of wandering and wretched children [are] to be gathered into schools and taught.”61

More secular objectives for the same crusade were expressed by the Reverend Orville Dewey of Massachusetts in a review of two new elementary school textbooks. Dewey saw “combinations of the employed to procure higher wages” and “political working-men’s parties” as threats to “tear up every social institution by the roots, and leave nothing behind but disorder, waste, and ruin.” The remedy for such evils lay in looking “to the very power which has given the impulse to control it. That power, undoubtedly, is education” of the common people. To fulfill its function of preserving social order, education must above all be moral, Dewey concluded. “Conscience,” and he repeated, “conscience is our safeguard!”62

It was fine to have available such spelling lessons as “Obedience to superiors is requisite in all society; it is consistent with propriety and adds to general convenience,”63 but what better text for the safeguarding conscience was available than the Bible? The study of the scriptures was seen by these reformers not as peripheral to the purposes of the common schools, but central.

Now every good American Protestant knew that the volume
God had written personally was that authorized by King James. To the Roman Catholic clergy, however, that translation was anathema. Its use in classrooms endangered the very souls of Catholic pupils. The dramatic expansion of the common school system in Philadelphia County in the decade following the 1834 act added urgency to the issue. All the while Protestants simply found Catholic objections incomprehensible. “We have never discovered anything in that book, the reading of which we could suppose would injure the morals of either Catholic children or their parents!” wrote one indignant Protestant.\(^4\)

Bishop Francis Patrick Kenrick of Philadelphia fought relentlessly and skillfully to protect his Catholic flock from the Protestant Bible. He realized that the Protestant clergy were adamant and very vocal in their insistence that the Bible remain in the schools. He also realized that news of the burning of King James Bibles by a Catholic missionary priest in a small town in upstate New York and of Bishop John Hughes’ call to New York City’s Catholics to form a separate political party around the Bible issue had inflamed Philadelphia’s Protestant establishment. Consequently Bishop Kenrick issued a discreet but firm public appeal to the Board of Controllers of the Pennsylvania common schools to allow Catholic children to use their own version of the Bible in class and to be excused from other religious instruction. He was partially successful. The Board of Controllers ruled in January 1843, that children whose “parents were conscientiously opposed” might be excused from class during Bible readings.\(^5\)

Agitation over the Bible in schools, like the excitement over liquor licensing, aroused both Catholic and Protestant workingmen with several important consequences. The first was the rise of Democratic politicians in Kensington and similar towns who were closely tied to the Irish weavers, but who defended them on cultural, rather than economic grounds. Leaders of the stripe of John Ferral, who had fought manufacturers and bankers in the political arena, were shunted aside by men like Hugh Clark, a boss weaver who fought “Puritan fanaticism.” Born in Ireland in 1796, Clark came to the United States around 1813 and by 1827 was a member of the masters’ Society of Weavers. His brother Patrick was a tavern keeper, and Hugh himself was a police magistrate of such prominence in the Catholic community that Protestant
rioters made a point of sacking both of their homes and tavern in 1844. When listed by the census-takers six years later, Hugh was an alderman and manufacturer, the owner of $30,000 of real estate, more than was reported by any other individual in the town. With him lived his 70-year-old mother and his two younger brothers, both weavers. Next door dwelt Patrick, who had replaced his lost tavern with a dyeing establishment valued at $6,700.66 Here was the political leader of Kensington’s Irish weavers, a man who opposed them in a succession of bitter strikes, then mounted the hustings to champion their right to a drink and the consciences of their children.

Second, Democratic artisans, among them some of the party’s most consistent anti-monopolists, reacted angrily to the new prominence of Irish ethnic politics in their party. A revolt of the self-styled “Incorruptibles” against Clark’s nomination for County Treasurer in 1841 split the Democratic Party and helped defeat Clark in his own home town.67 Two years later an insurrection was mounted by Thomas Grover, Lemuel Paynter and William D. Kelley, the leaders of the artisan wing of the Democratic Party in Southwark, against the party’s nomination of an Irishman for that district’s Congressional seat. The result again was victory for the Whigs.68 The whole Incorruptible movement was remarkably similar to the struggle in Williamsburg (Brooklyn) which the emigre Irish Chartist and land reformer Thomas A. Devyr described in his memoirs. Furiously opposing Catholic sectarian politics in the name of the local Democratic Party’s Jacksonian economic program, Devyr found himself denounced by his fellow Irishmen and hailed by the nativists.69

Third, the cleavages opened in Democratic ranks by the issues of liquor and schools tempted prominent Whigs to try to strike bargains with Democrats like Clark in order to capture county offices. In fact, nativist publicists charged that Whig lust for such votes lay behind the decision of the Whig-dominated Board of Controllers of the common schools to accede to Bishop Kenrick’s demand on the Bible reading question. Whether or not there was any truth in that charge, it is certain that when Morton McMichael ran for sheriff on the Whig ticket in 1843 he received considerable support from Irish Catholics out to avenge their recent defeats at the hands of native Democrats. An open letter in the press from
“A NATURALIZED CITIZEN; A DEMOCRAT AND AN IRISHMAN FOREVER” accused the Democratic party of proscribing Irish candidates both in 1841 and in the current Congressional elections in Southwark. The remedy it proposed was for Irishmen to vote Whig so that they could later return to the chastised Democratic fold. “The Whig County Ticket,” it claimed, “is made up of known and ardent friends of Ireland, and is headed with the name of Morton McMichael, who, like General Jackson, is the son of Irish parents, and, like him, every inch an Irishman!” Enough Irish voters heeded the advice of “A NATURALIZED CITIZEN” that McMichael won the election, carrying even Kensington by almost 200 votes, while the Democrats, as usual, handily won every other office in that town.

Finally, the success of Catholic sectarian politics and the Bishop's partial victory on the school issue account for the overnight mushrooming of the American Republican Party, a political movement to exclude immigrants from the suffrage and to defend the use of the King James Bible in schools. American Republican clubs had been operating in nearby Spring Garden since the end of the 1830s, and for more than a decade itinerant ministers, spellbound by the Romish menace, had been peddling the Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk about the county. They had little to show for their pains, though one had been arrested on charges of selling pornography in the guise of anti-Catholic literature. The school controversy, however, had united 94 leading clergymen of the city in a common pledge to strengthen Protestant education and “awaken the attention of the community to the dangers which... threaten these United States from the assaults of Romanism.” The American Tract Society took up the battle cry and launched a national crusade to save the nation from the “spiritual despotism” of Rome. The whole Protestant edifice of churches, Bible societies, temperance societies, and missionary agencies was thus interposed against Catholic electoral maneuvers in the name of “non-sectarian politics” at the very moment when those maneuvers were enjoying some success. Lewis Levin stepped over from the temperance movement to take command of the American Republican Party and led it with such skill that within one year it was in full control of the political life of the county.
The meteoric rise of the American Republican movement cannot be understood as a capitalist conspiracy to divide and crush the workers, even though it was portrayed in precisely this way by George Lippard’s contemporary novel *The Nazarene*, and it did enable the master weavers to destroy the union of their journey-men. To be sure, it enjoyed widespread but ordinarily tacit sympathy from the old Quaker elite of Philadelphia. Many of them shared the sentiment which Sidney G. Fisher confided to his diary:

This movement of the “native” party is decidedly conservative, because by excluding foreigners so much democracy is excluded, so much of the rabble, so much ignorance & brutality from political power. The natural ally of this party are the Whigs. Their object harmonizes with the instincts & secret wishes & opinions of the Whigs.74

Nevertheless, the American Republicans themselves were decidedly not upper class in leadership or following. Levin surrounded himself with out-of-office Whig politicians who opposed their party’s 1843 deal with the Catholics and Democrats of the Incorruptible camp. To their ranks he added an imposing array of minor publishers, attorneys, ministers of the gospel and a few master craftsmen as the leading cadres of his party. Among them were an ex-colonel, C. J. Jack, who sought to prove during the riots that a big city can have its village idiot, and Charles Naylor, a Southwark lawyer and former Whig Congressman from the northern suburbs, whom Fisher described as “partially deranged.”75 Thomas Grover, the wharf builder, and Lemuel Paynter, whom Grover had helped put in Congress a decade earlier as spokesman of Southwark’s artisans, were well known but hardly upper class. Only William B. Reed, of all the prominent nativists, had personal ties to the First Families, being a nephew of John Sergeant. But Reed’s involvement in bribery scandals connected with the Bank of the United States had not only cost him a Congressional seat; it also left him in disgrace with his fellow gentlemen.76

The following these men gathered can be identified from the lists of nativists injured or arrested in the riots and from the rolls of ward club officers printed in their newspaper *Native American*. This enumeration provides almost as many occupations as it does names of individuals, but the trades which appear more than once give a clue to the nature of the rest. They are victualler, butcher,
cordwainer, merchant and ship carpenter. All these occupations were not only dominated by native Americans, but were also the traditional trades and crafts of an American seaport.

In Kensington itself, the candidates nominated by the American Republicans for the February elections following the riots (1845) included a tax collector, a carpenter, a blacksmith, a tailor, a carter and a cabinetmaker. In the two wards where the party ran strongest, its candidates were an alderman and former combmaker, two ship carpenters, a chair maker, a brass worker and a victualler. The tightly-knit community of Kensington fishermen not only supplied a candidate for that election, but marched as a body in the American Republicans’ grand parade of July 4, 1844.

In short, during 1844 the American Republicans mobilized not only the electoral support but the active participation of Protestant artisans in Kensington, Southwark and other industrial suburbs. Superior tradesmen abounded at the movement’s secondary levels of leadership: cabinet makers, ship carpenters, butchers and victuallers, whose occupations had as yet suffered little erosion of traditional status and practices from burgeoning industrialization. Their conspicuous support to the top leadership of professional men and small proprietors gave the American Republican clubs an eerie resemblance to a resurrected Sons of Liberty three generations out of date. Less numerous but still evident among the activists were such building tradesmen as carpenters and bricklayers, and such workmen enmeshed in the putting-out system as shoemakers and tailors, who often suffered from the new competitive development of the economy almost as bitterly as the weavers, and who had contributed extraordinary strength to the General Trades’ Union of the thirties.

While all these workmen shared the animosity against Roman Catholicism which pervaded Anglo-Saxon culture, it is difficult to determine just how fully they were incorporated into the institutional structure of organized Protestantism. The upper classes of the time tended to scoff that most of the rioters would not know the difference between a Protestant and a Catholic Bible if they were confronted with the two books. Leading evangelists of the age, furthermore, not only disdained to preach to the lower classes, but agreed with Albert Barnes that workingmen were by
and large incapable of genuine religious experience. On the other hand, four Protestant churches (Episcopalian, Baptist, Presbyterian and Unitarian) were substantial enough to appear on a Kensington map of 1850, and the census takers of that year were to uncover no fewer than 16 Protestant ministers in town.

There is no way of knowing the nature of the congregations served by each of these preachers, but perhaps some meaningful guess can be made on the basis of the character of the neighborhoods in which they resided. Six of the preachers were found among substantial home-owning tradesmen and small employers near the waterfront, or in one case in the rustic outskirts of the weaving district. One of them did not specify his denomination. The others were a New Light Baptist, an Old Light Baptist, a Presbyterian and two Methodists (one of which was a very young man with very prosperous neighbors). The Episcopal-ian priest lived among poor laborers and weavers but probably because that was where his large church was situated. A Presbyterian, a Reformed Presbyterian and a Methodist lived among Irish weavers, as has already been pointed out.

The remaining six lived among poorer workmen of various occupations. One was a German who gave no affiliation. Another was an Irish-born Old School Presbyterian. Near him lived a 19-year-old Primitive Methodist, whose father was a Pennsylvania-born carpenter. Two others were Methodists, one Irish and one native Pennsylvanian, both living among shoemakers, tailors and carpenters. The last was William Metcalf, a 70-year-old Bible Christian (“ranting Bryantite”) from England who lived in a pocket of native- and English-born workmen in the midst of the largest weaving ward. It is probable that these men represented the world of popular sects or “store front churches,” which is as elusive to the historian as it was central to the culture of the working classes.

It appears, then, that Protestantism was a vital force in the ideology of these workingmen. Through its influence they could be attached to the middle-class leadership of a political party whose negative reference group was the Catholic immigrant, provided those leaders draped the movement with the most cherished symbols of artisan culture. Lewis Levin played to the values, the hopes and the anxieties of his audience of artisans with
unerring aim. His paper, the *Native American*, displayed Longfellow’s *Village Blacksmith* and with equal emphasis acclaimed the continuing “march of improvement.”\(^2\) The evils of the times were attributed to the behavior of the corrupt politician, who had allied himself with foreign-born voters, alien to America’s egalitarian traditions and subject in their voting behavior to the discipline of the Roman Catholic church. The American Republicans promised to reintroduce into politics the sense of personal honor once exemplified by the Revolutionary Founding Fathers, to win the “entire separation of sectarianism from Politics” and to secure both objectives through “AN OPEN BIBLE and a PURE BALLOT BOX!”\(^3\)

Kensington soon provided the nativists an ideal battleground for their cause. While Bishop Kenrick tried to soothe Protestant fears with statement after statement denying any desire to deprive Protestant school children of their King James Bible, magistrate Hugh Clark himself authorized a Kensington teacher to omit Bible reading altogether in her overwhelmingly Catholic class. American Republicans responded by dispatching emissaries to the weaving town to demand the culprit’s resignation. At first the meetings attracted more Catholic hecklers than Protestant supporters, and two local American Republicans who tried to organize a club in the middle of the weaving district were prevented by their neighbors from holding a meeting.\(^4\) Inspired by their party’s triumph in the April elections in New York City, however, the nativists did stage an open air rally addressed by S.R. Cramer, a Philadelphia carpenter and publisher of the *Native American*, on a Friday evening early in May within a block of a Catholic church, only to see the speaker driven from his platform by about a hundred angry Catholics.\(^5\)

The following Monday, May 6, Levin himself accompanied Cramer to the scene of Friday’s debacle to avenge the insult. Tensions were already running high when a heavy rain drove the nativists across the street to the shelter of the Nanny Goat Market. There Levin ascended some packing boxes in the midst of Irish shoppers to hold forth on “the deleterious effects of Popish interference in the elective franchise.” Hardly had he begun when the marketers assaulted him and his followers with vegetables, fists and bricks. Rallying their forces, the nativists charged the Irish in
the streets, then assaulted the Hibernia Hose House and two weavers’ cottages from which, they later claimed, they had been fired upon. Gunfire was soon general on both sides; but because the Protestants were in the open and the Irish snipers inside, the heavy casualties were suffered by the nativist side: four badly beaten, seven shot, and a morocco dresser’s apprentice, George Shiffler, killed.86

By mid-evening both sides had swelled to great crowds, freely shooting at each other. Protestant reinforcements from Philadelphia fought their way north along Second Avenue into the weaving district. Two more nativists, a blind maker and the son of a salt merchant, were killed and an Irish captive severely beaten in a battle which, quite appropriately, found Catholics firing from behind the walls of a seminary while the nativists barricaded themselves across the street in a temperance grocery store.87

“Another St. Bartholomew’s day is begun in the streets of Philadelphia,” editorialized the Native American the next day, while Colonel Jack rallied Protestants to march from Philadelphia and Southwark north to Kensington, armed with fife and drum, torch and musket, to exorcise the menace of Popish bigotry. By early afternoon the town was locked in pitched battle. Nativists charged from building to building burning and sacking the homes and back buildings of weavers John Lavery, Matthew Quinn, Barnard Sherry, Owen McCulloch, Michael Keenan, Hugh Devlin and John Mellon. Two carpet manufacturies and the homes and stock of peddler Patrick McGee and tailor Thomas Sheridan were put to the torch. In all, some 30 buildings were ablaze by the time troops arrived escorting firemen into the town.88

On Wednesday, more than 3,000 troops, complete with artillery, placed Kensington under martial law. Sheriff McMichael tried to secure his political future by demanding that the troops shoot no one, save in self-defense, and restrict themselves to guarding the property of the Roman Catholic church. In this setting, bands of nativists, mostly boys, searched Irish homes for arms and beat the owners of houses where weapons were found. Despite the presence of soldiers, Protestants set fire to St. Michael’s Church in Kensington and to St. Augustine’s Church in Philadelphia along the route north to Kensington, as well as Hugh Clark’s house and his brother’s tavern.89 Not until Thursday was
the town smoldering quietly, with refugees trudging aimlessly about and small bands of boys looting. Public meetings were banned everywhere in the county, and troops dispersed anything that faintly resembled a demonstration as far away as Southwark and Moyamensing.90

The weavers' community had been gutted. General George Cadwalader's successful defense of the city's cathedral and, later in July, of St. Philip's Church in Southwark was to earn him the praise and thanks of Bishop Kenrick; but the army had been unable to protect the cottages or even the lives of the weavers. In fact, it had little will to do so; the soldiers visibly sympathized with the nativists.91

Judging from the names of the victims, it seems that the rioters burned the homes of Protestant as well as Catholic weavers. Although American Republican rhetoric identified Roman Catholicism as the enemy, the nativist rioters made the weaving community as a whole their target. Conversely, there is no evidence of participation by Protestant weavers in the American Republican movement before the riot. It is true that the first American Republican shot in the Nanny Goat Market, former constable Patrick Fisher, was a Protestant Irishman and that four years later a weavers' spokesman charged that the riot had been "incited by North of Ireland Orangemen." But the three Irishmen who led the first American Republican club in Kensington were a flour dealer, a rope maker and an undertaker-cabinetmaker.92 Possibly the common wage struggles and the single union organization of Protestant and Catholic weavers generated a group solidarity which rendered these particular Protestants impervious to the American Republican appeal. Only as avenging mobs stormed toward their homes did some Protestants understandably begin to post American flags, or better yet, mastheads from the paper Native American, in their windows to convert the crowd from angry shouts to loud cheers.93

Despite the familiarity of clashes between Orangemen and Catholics to Irishmen on both sides of the Atlantic, it does seem that there were Irish Protestants among that significant minority of workingmen who remained loyal Democrats in defiance of the new trend to sectarian politics. A Protestant lad from County Antrim could write home to his father after the riots that he
despised the nativists, was “a Democrat out and out, and takes the platform for the cause against Monarchy and aristocracy.” The persistent vitality of the Repeal Association in Philadelphia, in which both Hugh Clark and William D. Kelley participated even though they were on opposite sides of the “Incorruptible” fence at the time, testifies to the resilience of the eighteenth-century Irish heritage of Catholic-Dissenter cooperation against the Anglican Establishment. On the fourth of July 1841, the Repealers had turned out 1,860 participants for a parade led by the Montgomery Hibernia Greens, a rifle company of Protestants which three years later was to find itself brutally attacked by nativists in Southwark. When President Tyler, ostracized from the Whig Party, set out to build a Democratic base, his son Robert became president of the Philadelphia Repeal Association. Consequently, while there were Irish Protestant activists among the American Republicans, it is understandable that the party at times denounced all Irishmen and doubly understandable that Levin sometimes identified the Repeal Association as his main enemy.

Clearly there were other workmen who found the nativist movement unattractive. The Democratic vote throughout the county remained far larger in 1844 than could be accounted for by Catholics alone. Shoemakers, tailors and laborers appear in the rolls of American Republican activists but in numbers far smaller than their proportion of the labor force. Factory operatives are conspicuously absent, though one should study a mill town like Manayunk before passing judgment on their role. Such shoemakers’ leaders as Samuel Thompson, William English and William Gilmore, who had entered politics as Democrats in the 1830s, remained Democrats through the forties. Like William D. Kelley and the land reformer-novelist George Lippard, who attributed the riots to a joint conspiracy of Calvinist bankers and Rome to destroy American democracy, these men denounced both sides in the sectarian controversies which raged about them. They were the genuine Locofocos, political foes of capitalists, evangelists and priests alike, and at least some of them still adhered publicly to the Painite Rationalism which had been so widespread among workingmen’s leaders in the 1830s. Their working-class following, that minority which was neither nativist nor immigrant, needs and deserves a historical study all its own.
Neither Repealers nor Locofocos, however, could stop American Republican artisans from securing control of local politics in the wake of the Kensington riot. Large numbers of nativists enlisted in the armed citizen guards raised to protect Catholic buildings and police Kensington, a service for which they were highly praised by Major General Patterson. They saw to it that 13 of the 19 men arrested for disturbances in Kensington had unmistakably Irish names and, later in July when Protestants were to fight the army in Southwark, that volunteers en masse refused to turn out.99

While the weavers and all others were strictly forbidden by military orders to assemble, General Patterson was persuaded to allow a public meeting of the Washington Temperance Society nine days after the end of the riot. Nine days after the temperance meeting, he permitted a gathering of the American Republicans in the second ward of Kensington itself and sent along troops of the second brigade to protect it. By mid-June all bans had been lifted and a memorial service for eight nativists killed in the riots was held in Kensington's Brickmakers' Methodist Protestant Church. A soiree at the Christian Home Missionary Society of Philadelphia the same evening raised funds for families of the Protestant martyrs.100 The report of the Grand Jury of the Court of Quarter Sessions investigating the riot placed all the blame on the Catholics, Magistrate Clark and Sheriff McMichael.101 All the while, American Republican rallies of ever-growing size were being held throughout the county; and Levin trumpeted charges that “persons of wealth” were financing the arming of Catholics with “splendid rifles and warlike munitions” for their “Guy Fawkes plots and infernal machinations.” “Burn no churches, even if your fathers were murdered before your eyes,” he advised, but defeat the enemy at the polls.102

Independence Day provided the occasion for a long heralded manifestation by the nativists of their power and their determination to “sweep the demagogues” from office. Whether the parade numbered the 30,000 participants claimed by the Native American or the 4,500 Colonel A.R. Pleasonton noted in his diary, it must have been impressive. The pageantry and symbolism were of the same pattern displayed in artisans’ demonstrations from the welcoming of the Federal Constitution in 1788 to the July Fourth
processions of trades’ unions in the 1830s. All delegations were gaily bedecked, many with their trade insignia. A Temple of Liberty was drawn at the front of the parade, and replicas of Washington, the Declaration of Independence and the Bible were everywhere to be seen. Widows and orphans of the Kensington martyrs held a special place of honor. Even two blacks were allowed to participate in this celebration of Protestant liberties—as water carriers for the other marchers.103

The nativists had every reason to be exultant. Despite blistering verbal assaults to which they were subjected by leading spokesmen of both the Whigs and the Democrats, they carried the fall elections in all the manufacturing suburbs. Levin was sent to Congress from Southwark and his colleague J.H. Campbell from the district which included Kensington. One state senate seat and those of the eight county representatives in the state house, all of which had formerly been filled by Democrats, were taken by American Republicans. The county commissioner’s office was handily captured by Thomas Grover. Everywhere the pattern of voting was the same. Democratic tallies fell off sharply, and almost all former Whig votes went American Republican.104 No longer was the commercial city the stronghold of the Whigs and the manufacturing county that of the Democrats, as had long been the case. American Republican endorsement of two Whig candidates, Henry Clay for President and Joseph Markle for Governor, allowed both men to carry with ease the city and county alike.105

In local elections the following February the nativists strengthened their political grip on the county. In the five wards of Southwark, all of them once solidly Democratic, the American Republicans’ share of the total vote cast ran from a low of 63.2 percent to a high of 71.8 percent. In Kensington, where the Whigs fielded no candidates of their own and native-born Democrats clung to their traditional party in far greater numbers than their Southwark counterparts, the contest was somewhat less one-sided. The fourth ward, and even the fifth, where most of the fighting had taken place, went to the nativists in what their press hailed as a “Waterloo sweep.” In the first and third wards American Republican candidates were narrowly defeated (in the former by only two votes). Of special interest is the second ward, situated directly on the line of march from Philadelphia to the Nanny Goat
Market. Alderman Boileau of this erstwhile bastion of anti-bank Democrats switched his affiliation from the Democratic to the American Republican party and was handily re-elected.106

The route by which the nativists attained this level of political power had involved them in more street fighting, as well as electioneering. The conflict which raged in the vicinity of St. Philip de Neri Church in Southwark between Friday, July 5, and Monday, July 8, took a considerably greater toll of lives, though not of property, than had the riot in Kensington. Southwark was an American Republican stronghold, a community of traditional seaport craftsmen, laborers and sailors. An assault by more than a thousand of its residents on St. Philip’s Church, following the rumor that Catholics were caching arms there, precipitated a direct clash between the nativists and the troops. No Catholics were involved in the fighting which ensued. Nativist leaders sought ardently, though in vain, to fend off violence. On the other hand, though soldiers frequently proved reluctant to fire at the crowd and troops of the Markle Rifles actually deserted the church to fraternize with those storming it, their commanders were clearly determined to put a forceful end to rioting once and for all. Generals Patterson and Cadwalader demanded that city officials give them a free hand, not the restraints under which they had served in Kensington; and they got their way.107

Although there is not the space here for a narrative of the battle, two aspects of the encounter are of importance. First, the behavior of Philadelphia’s social elite showed that while they might have sympathized with the nativists’ proclaimed objectives, they were aghast at the mob forces which nativism had unleashed. Even before the Southwark riot the Public Ledger had drawn the editorial lesson from Kensington that soldiers should not fire over the heads of rioters but at them. Joseph R. Ingersoll had written to General Cadwalader that “the population of a large town is always excitable,” so that a “power must exist to check its first outbreak, and it must be both willing and able to do so effectually. A strong preventive police is cheaper than indemnity for destroyed churches,” he argued. Especially in “a country like ours where the people are supreme,” there should be a “paid police on a basis which would always be in action—like Sir Robert Peel’s men in England.”108
After the Southwark fighting, scores of the city's "members of the bar, merchants, & men of education & property," among them Horace Binney, John Sergeant, Joseph R. Ingersoll and Sidney Fisher, met at Evans Tavern and addressed a memorial to the Governor praising the performance of the military forces. "Religion and politics have nothing whatever to do with such men as have been acting in these scenes, nor such men with them," they wrote. "The rioters are men cast off from all respect for law, or for our institutions, and are ready for arson, for murder, for rape..." To quell such activities, they recommended the quartering of a permanent military regiment in the city.\(^{10}\)

Secondly, for the mass of Philadelphia's voters, the Southwark battle had cast the American Republicans in a heroic role, as embattled American workmen courageously defending their homes against invading troops. The cannonades of grape shot and the cavalry charges of the soldiers had been answered by three cannons used with considerable success by the citizens. By early Monday morning, when the exhausted troops found themselves at last patrolling empty streets, 15 of their number had been wounded, four more dangerously lacerated and two lay dead. Fallen civilians were estimated by J.H. Lee at 50, though there is little firm evidence to support his guess. Threats of a mob assembling for renewed assault later Monday induced governmental authorities to withdraw the battered troops and allow the American Republican leaders themselves to pacify the town. No one else could control the populace.\(^{11}\)

The perspective of the next ten years helps one judge the significance of these tumultuous events. The First Families got their uniformed, professional police force, with a permanent military establishment of 1,350 cavalry, infantry and artillerymen to stand in reserve.\(^{12}\) For a full decade, furthermore, they fended off a drive led by Morton McMichael, who now allied himself with the nativists, to consolidate the suburbs with the city. Fear that popular demagogues would dominate the larger unit prompted Horace Binney to rally municipal bondholders against the absorption of Kensington and Southwark into Philadelphia until the next nativist upsurge, the Know-Nothings, overwhelmed them.\(^{13}\)

The handloom weavers were never to recover the wages with
which they had entered 1844. Several subsequent strikes, based more in Moyamensing than in Kensington, failed to rescue their trade from the economic obsolescence and overcrowding which haunted it in this decade from Pennsylvania to Yorkshire and Silesia.\footnote{1. See Liston Pope, \textit{Millhands and Preachers, A Study of Gastonia} (New Haven, E.P. Thompson, “Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism,” \textit{Past and Present}, No. 38 (Dec., 1967), 56-97. Lee Benson, \textit{The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy} (Princeton, 1961) is the classic work on “ethnocultural” determinants of American} However, in contrast, Hugh Clark, Michael Keenan and other master weavers recovered quickly and progressed to greater fortunes.

The American Republicans' electoral strength began to wither within two years after 1844, as one office after another returned to the Whigs or Democrats. But there was no resurgence of class cohesiveness in the political behavior of workingmen. On election days Protestant and Catholic workingmen continued to align themselves not with each other, but with employers of their respective ethnic groups.\footnote{2. Lee Benson, \textit{The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy} (Princeton, 1961) is the classic work on “ethnocultural” determinants of American}

Although the economic impact of industrialization was felt in quite different ways and involved remarkably different rates of change for factory operatives, outworkers and the many varieties of craftsmen, all these groups shared common interests enough to allow them to act as a class in support of trade union efforts and such political demands as the legal ten hour day. This unity had been the driving force behind the urban radicalism of the 1830s. Quite different was the impact of the ideology of modernization by which a new sense of social order and discipline was imposed on the industrializing community. Because major elements of this ideology were transmitted through the political demands of evangelical Protestantism, above all liquor licensing and the moral content of public education, the responses of workingmen to modernization varied with their own religious beliefs. No political conflicts of the age touched the daily lives of the people more intimately than these issues. By their very nature, evangelical demands fragmented the working class as a political force in ante-bellum Philadelphia and thereby created for historians the illusion of a society lacking in class conflict.

\textbf{FOOTNOTES}

political behavior, but the book shows no awareness of the interaction between those determinants and class relations in the setting of industrialization.


3. U.S. National Archives, 1850 Census Population Schedules. Pennsylvania (microfilm rolls 806-07), 4th ward, dwellings 72, 74, 78 (p. 245); 3d ward, dwellings 621-22 (p. 170) 1071 (p. 205); 5th ward, p. 324. Hereafter these schedules will be cited as 7th Census MSS.


5. See T.W. Dyott, *An Exposition of the System of Moral and Mental Labor Established at the Glass Factory of Dyottville* (Philadelphia, 1833) for a description of this work when it employed about 400 people. The calculation of nativity of glass workers is mine, from 7th Census MSS.

6. All figures are calculated from 7th Census MSS.


8. 7th Census MSS, 2d ward, dwelling 757, p. 106.


12. My count from 7th Census MSS.


14. *HR*, I (Jan., 1828), 28; letter of “One Who Knows, and a Weaver” to *Spirit of the Times*, Sept. 13, 1848; “Meeting of the Weavers,” Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, March 2, 1845 (hereinafter cited as *PPL*).

15. Freedley, 241-42.


17. 7th Census MSS, 2d ward, dwellings 98-102, pp. 63-64.

18. *Ibid.*, 3d ward, dwelling 1329, p. 231. The date of emigration in this and later cases is guessed from the age of the oldest child born in America.


20. My count from 7th Census MSS. Of 2,238 weavers, 1,758 were born in Ireland. Of
the weavers not born in Ireland 204 were English, 114 American, and 105 German by birth. The rest were from Scotland (55), France (2), and Switzerland (1). Of the 114 born in the U.S., 33 were clearly sons of Irish immigrants, as were many of those born in England. The 3rd and 6th wards of 1850 were made from the 5th ward of 1844, focal point of the riots, as was the rural 7th ward.

21. A significant but smaller peak of immigration was reached between 1836 and 1838.

22. 7th Census MSS, 6th ward, dwellings 70 (p. 406), 103 (p. 408), 96 (p. 408), 528 (p. 440).

23. PPL, May 11, 1844.


28. HR, I (Jan., 1828), 28.

29. Carpet weavers' assemblies of the Knights of Labor continued this practice in Kensington into the 1870s. See Pa. Bis, XVII (1889), 18D-19D; Terence V. Powderly, Thirty Years of Labor, 1859-1889 (Columbus, 1889), 183.


31. Ibid., V, 391.

32. Pa. Bis, VIII (1880-81), 266-68.

33. PPL, June 6, 1843.

34. Letter of “One Who Knows, and a Weaver” to Spirit of the Times, Sept. 13, 1848; Pa. Bis, VIII (1880-81), 269; PPL, Aug. 11, 16, 1843. This rate may have been as much as one cent per yard higher than the season’s scale in Moyamensing, but a march of weavers from that town to Kensington failed to inspire a sympathy strike there. See PPL, Aug. 12, 15, 16, 1843; “Meeting of the Weavers,” ibid., March 2, 1845.

35. PPL, May 24, 1844; “One Who Knows, and a Weaver” to Spirit of the Times, Sept. 13, 1848. In 1848 Freedley was to find the going rate no higher than three cents. Freedley, 254.


38. On the special demands of cabinet makers, see *PPL*, Oct. 15, 1841; Sept. 4, 1843. On those of butchers, see *PPL*, May 9, 1839.


41. *PPL*, April 28, Sept. 8, 1838.

42. John Ferral to James Buchanan, Feb. 19, 1838 (Buchanan Papers, Box 92, Historical Society of Pennsylvania).


44. *PPL*, May 9, 1839.

45. *PPL*, Nov. 21, 1840.


49. *American Museum*, IV (July, 1788), 78.


51. *PPL*, March 29, 1839.

52. *PPL*, Feb. 21, 1842; Dec. 13, 1843. Artisans supporting Whig candidates had organized their efforts in temperance halls as early as 1838. See the account of the Naylor meeting, *PPL*, Sept. 24, 1838.


54. *PPL*, Jan 24, 1842.

55. For a good discussion of the transition from temperance to prohibition see Joseph


57. PPL, Aug. 25, 1836.

58. Penniman, 2.

59. PPL, July 10, 1844.


62. [Orville Dewey], "Popular Education. 1. The Political Class Book... by WILLIAM SULLIVAN... 2. The Moral Class Book... by the SAME..." North American Review XXXVI (Jan., 1833), 73-99. The quotations are on pp. 81 and 96.

63. B. Brandneth, A New System for the Instruction of Youth (New York, 1836), quoted in Ruth Elson, Guardians of Tradition (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1964), 102.


68. PPL, Oct. 12, 1843.

69. Devyr, American Section, 35-38.

70. PPL, Oct. 7, 1843. For the American Republicans' accusations of conspiracy between Bishop Kenrick and Whigs on the Board of Controllers, see Lee, 17-21; Billington, 214, n.49.
71. *PPL*, Oct. 12, 1843. Charges of collusion in this election between McMichael and the Catholics were commonplace at the time of the riots. See the *Address of the American Republicans* (Cadwalader Collection, folder May 22-June 29, 1844, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, hereinafter cited as CC); George Cadwalader to J.R. Ingersoll, May 24, 1844 (CC); Grand Jury Report, *PPL*, June 17, 1844.

72. Lee, 31-32; Billington, 182-84. The quotation is from Billington, 183.


76. *D.A.B.*, VIII, 461-62; McClure, I, 89-91; Fisher, 125.


78. The candidate was Charles Bakeoven. *NA*, Feb. 22, 1845. On the parade, see Lee, 155.

79. It is noteworthy, however, that despite the strenth of Methodism and temperance among shoemakers, their most prominent spokesmen in political life, William English, William Gilmore, Israel Young and Samuel Thompson, remained Democrats through the 1840s.


81. 7th Census MSS: 1st ward, J.C. Lyons (O.S. Presbyterian), George W. Brindle (Primitive Methodist); 2d ward, C. Hummel (no denomination), Francis Hoffman (Methodist); 3d ward, William Metcalf (Bible Church), John Shields (Methodist); 4th ward, David Dailey (Methodist), William Paulin (O.L. Baptist), George Hand (N.L. Baptist); 5th ward, George Chandler (Presbyterian), Alfred Cookman (Methodist), John G. Maxwell (Presbyterian); 6th ward, John G. Wilson (Methodist Protestant), Thomas Flavell (Reformed Presbyterian), Robert Black (Presbyterian); 7th ward, Daniel Gaston (no denomination).


83. *NA*, Sept. 16, 1844. The argument that immigration depressed American wages was a late-comer to American Republican editorializing. See *NA*, Nov. 29, 1844.

84. Billington, 221-24; Lee, 40-46.

86. PPL, May 7, 1844; NA, May 7, 1844; Lee, 48-65.

87. PPL, May 7, 8, 9, 184; NA, May 7, 1844; Lee, 63-66.

88. NA, May 7, 1844; PPL, May 8, 11, 1844; Lee, 71-78.

89. PPL, May 9, 1844; Lee, 78-89; Cadwalader notebook, “Suppression of Riots,” 8-16, 19, 62-64 (CC); Col. A. R. Pleasonton to Gen. Patterson, May 8, 1844 (CC); Tho. T. Firth to Col. A.R. Pleasonton, May 8, 1844 (CC); Order No. 6, May 9, 1844 (CC).

90. PPL, May 9, 11, 1844; Order No. 7, May 10, 1844 (CC).

91. Francis Patrick Kenrick (Bishop) to Brigadier General George Cadwalader, July 29, 1844 (CC). On the behavior of troops, see Brig. Gen. H. Hubbell to Cadwalader, dated “20 minutes to noon” (CC); Col. Pleasonton to Gen. Cadwalader, May 20, 1844, (Cadwalader notebook, 62-64); PPL, May 9, 1844; General August Pleasonton Diary, 1838-1844, 422-23 (Historical Society of Pennsylvania); Fisher, 173.

92. On Irish-born American Republicans, see Lee, 54, 71-72. On the Orangemen charge, see “One Who Knows, and a Weaver” to Spirit of the Times, Sept. 13, 1848.

93. PPL, May 11, 1844. In Moyamensing two leaders of the weavers’ union were prominent American Republicans. See Laurie, 269.


97. Lee, 105.


99. Order No. 19, May 13, 1844 (CC); PPL, May 9, 1844; Fisher, 167, 173; Edward Hurst to Alderman Snyder, May 10, 1844 (CC); Grand Jury of the County of Philadelphia Minute Book, Sept. 2-Oct. 23, 1844.

100. Order No. 20, May 14, 1844 (CC); pass slip initialed G.C., May 19, 1844 (CC);
Geo. Cadwalader to Gen. Patterson, May 19, 1844 (CC); PPL, May 28, 1844; N/A, June 15, 1844.

101. PPL, June 17, 1844. Col. C. J. Jack was charged with embracery for a letter he sent to the Grand Jury. PPL, May 30, June 10, 1844.

102. N/A, June 25, 1844. The quotations are all from Levin editorials in the Philadelphia Sun, May 11-13, reproduced in Lee, 104-09.

103. N/A, July 6, 1844; Pleasonton Diary, 417. For examples of earlier artisans' parades see American Museum, IV (July, 1788), 57-78; Frederick Robinson, An Oration Delivered before the Trades Union of Boston and Vicinity (Boston, 1834), 32.

104. PPL, Oct. 12, 14, 1844. For examples of major party attacks on the American Republicans as instigators of violence, see the speeches of William Seward and William D. Kelley, N/A, Aug. 10, Sept. 16, 1844. For an excellent summary of the editorial attitudes of Philadelphia newspapers toward American Republicans, see Lee, 103-30.

105. PPL, Oct. 12, 14, 1844.

106. Laurie, 266; N/A, Feb. 22, 1845.


110. United States Gazette, July 12, 1844; letter of Horace Binney et al., loc. cit., July 11, 1844 (clippings in CC); Fisher, 174.

111. Cadwalader to Patterson, July 19, 1844 (draft report in CC); Lee, 174-77; Fisher, 172-73.


113. Warner, 152-57; Fisher, 179.

114. See "One Who Knows, and a Weaver" to Spirit of the Times, Sept. 13, 1848; Freedley, 254.