"To Destroy Popery and Everything Appertinent Thereto": William Chaney, the Jesuit John Bapst, and the Know-Nothings in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Maine

David Dzurec*

For the Jesuit priest John Bapst and newspaper editor William Chaney, the populist impulse that marked American politics in the turbulent decade of the 1850s offered opportunities. For Bapst, it meant engaging Catholics and Protestants throughout Maine in an effort to spread the Catholic faith. For Chaney, it meant riding the wave of Know-Nothing politics to secure a place for himself in coastal Maine society. The efforts of both men would collide in a moment of violence that ultimately marked an end to Chaney's time in Maine and strengthened Bapst's missionary resolve.

Keywords: *anti-Catholicism*, *Know-Nothings*, *populism*, *Society of Jesus*

In July 1854, the selectmen of Ellsworth, Maine, called for a town meeting to denounce a spate of anti-Catholic violence in the lumbering and ship-building town. When the citizens gathered on July 8 at the Congregational Church, those responsible for much of the recent violence packed the meeting, dashing the peace-seeking hopes of the Ellsworth officials. The members of the "Cast Iron Band," a branch of the larger anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic Know-Nothing movement, proceeded to take control of the agenda and vote out the sitting Democratic majority replacing them with members of their own number. Once in power the newly elected selectmen passed a resolution threatening to tar and feather "one John Bapst, S.J., Catholic Priest" and then ride him out of town on a rail should he "be found again upon Ellsworth soil." Passage of the legislation

*Dr. Dzurec is an associate professor and chair of history at the University of Scranton, email: david.dzurec@scranton.edu. The author wishes to thank Kathleen Neils Conzen for her feedback and Mark Honey for research assistance as well as the Jesuit Center at the University of Scranton for research support.

was greeted with applause and signed by Cast Iron Band member William H. Chaney, town clerk and editor of the *Ellsworth Herald*.[1]

The Cast Iron Band's coup that July evening marked a strikingly swift transition from secret society to governing body, driven largely by an animosity toward John Bapst. The group's evolution from nativist fraternal society to political party was emblematic of a larger shift for the "Know-Nothing" groups throughout the United States during this period. Nationally, the rise of the "Know-Nothings" coincided with the breakdown of the "second party system" as, in the wake of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, northern voters' dissatisfaction with the Democratic and Whig parties peaked. This growing and tumultuous dissatisfaction contributed to an expansion of the nascent "Know-Nothing" Party as they worked to fuse an anti-Catholic, nativist impulse with a reform-minded, anti-slavery message, drawing many Northern Democrats and Whigs into their fold.[2] While this fusion of varied interests result in rapid success, the movement was also very much a reflection of its confused time. As historian Ronald Formisano described it, the movement was at once "populist *and* progressive *and* reactionary."[3] In short, the Know-Nothings were an opportunistic movement that espoused opposition with little concern for coherence or consistency. Yet, in this period of uncertainty for the young United States, Know-Nothing defiance to the existing order seemed to be enough to attract adherents across the nation.

The Know-Nothings were only one manifestation of what was a period of profound transformation for the United States. In addition to the political turmoil surrounding the breakdown of the "second party system," the loss of the founding generation left many Americans questioning the future of the republic, waves of immigrants resulted in an increasing diversity in the religious and ethnic makeup of the population, and the expansion of capitalism resulted in increasing economic insecurity. Reaction to this tumult, even beyond the Know-Nothing movement, manifested itself in myriad forms ranging from efforts at self-improvement and temperance to outright xenophobia. By 1851, Maine had emerged as one of the key

---

1. The resolution was republished in numerous newspapers including the *Bangor* [ME] *Mercury,* October 21, 1854, 1 and "The Catholic Priest that was Tarred and Feathered and Ridden on a Rail," *Philadelphia Inquirer,* October 25, 1854, 1.

2. Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know-Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York, 1992), p. xiii.

3. Ronald Formisano, *For the People: American Populist Movements from the Revolution to the 1850s* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2008), p. 199, emphasis in original.

battlegrounds in these reform efforts with the passage of the "Maine Law," which enacted a strict regulation of alcohol and became a model for other states throughout the nation. By the time of the state elections in 1853, the reform impulse had only grown in strength with candidates and voters open to new ideas and embracing a variety of anti-partisan and reform movements.[4]

It was in this unsettled political environment that both John Bapst, S.J., and William H. Chaney found ready-made constituencies for their individual messages of reform. In both cases, the two men possessed a seemingly intuitive understanding of the populist element of the national mood which they aided in their reform efforts. Despite the similarities in their approach the ultimate aims of both men were diametrically opposed. For Bapst, the unsettled nature of mid-nineteenth-century America provided the ideal moment to win converts while strengthening the faith of existing Catholics. For Chaney, the Know-Nothing movement provided a home that he had lacked for much of his life and provided a lifelong outsider with access to the heart of the community. The collision of Bapst's and Chaney's strains of populism, culminating with the attack on Bapst, reveals the depth of the anxiety induced by the turmoil facing the United States during this period. Yet, for as much as the tarring and feathering of the Jesuit missionary offers insight into the depth of American anxiety in the mid-nineteenth century, the response of Bangor's Protestant population is as instructive as the attack itself. The denunciation of what many came to call the "outrage at Ellsworth" demonstrates the limits of Chaney and the Know-Nothings's brand of intolerance. Ultimately Bapst's efforts

4. On the loss of the founding generation, see Alfred Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (Boston, 1999), pp. 180–81; and Simon Burrows, *Forgotten Patriots: The Untold Story of American Prisoners During the Revolutionary War* (New York, 2008), pp. 229–37. On immigration and nativism, see W. J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York, 1979); Katie Oxx, *The Nativist Movement in America: Religious Conflict in the Nineteenth Century,* [Critical Moments in American History], (New York, 2013) pp. 15–31; Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery,* pp. 3–10; John T. McGreevy, *American Jesuits and the World: How an Embattled Religious Order Made Modern Catholicism Global* (Princeton, 2015), pp. 20–25; Mark Voss-Hubbard, *Beyond Party: Cultures of Antipartisanship in Northern Politics before the Civil War* (Baltimore, 2002), pp. 107–08; Scott See, "Variations on a Borderlands Theme: Nativism and Collective Violence in Northeastern North America in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," in *New England and the Maritime Provinces: Connections and Comparisons,* ed. Stephen Hornsby and Hon Reid (Montreal, 2005), pp. 125–43; David Brion Davis, *The Fear of Conspiracy: Images of Un-American Subversion for the Revolution to the Present* (Ithaca, NY, 1971); Formisano, *For the People,* pp. 198–212; and Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York, 1999), pp. 778–800.

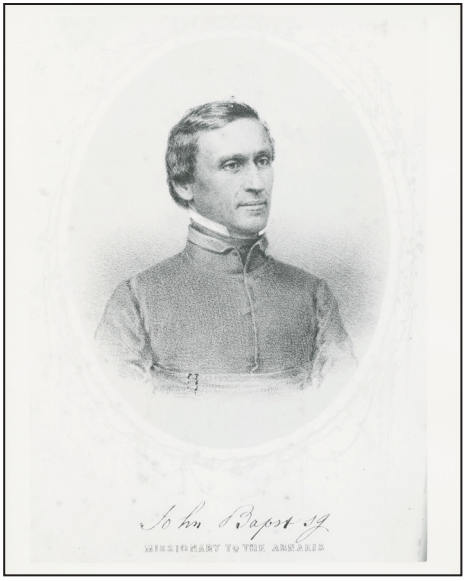

Figure 1. Image of John Bapst, S.J., n.d. Boston College Faculty and Staff Photographs, 1872–2012, Box 1, Folder 23, John J. Burns Library, Boston College, no. BC.2000.005ref15028.

to reform American society would continue long after Chaney and the Know-Nothings had been denounced by their one-time supporters.[5]

* * *

The Swiss-born Bapst entered the Jesuit order in 1835 and was ordained in December 1846. Following the Sonderbund War, a civil war between the Catholic and Protestant cantons, Bapst fled Switzerland for France. In spring 1848, shortly after arriving in France, Bapst and many of his exiled Swiss colleagues received orders to travel to the American missions. Bapst made his way to New York before arriving at his assigned post

5. For a comparison between American and European religious intolerance, see McGreevy, *American Jesuits and the World*, pp. 21–25. McGreevy argues that, despite the United States' higher level of tolerance than many European countries, the anti-Catholic climate of the nineteenth century convinced Catholics of the need to develop a distinct Catholic subculture in the United States. For a discussion regarding American secularism in the wake of World War II, see McGreevy, pp. 211–13. It is argued here that Bapst's engagement with American secularism and his efforts at reform only grew stronger as time passed rather than retreated into a distinctly Catholic subculture.

in Old Town, Maine, to minister to the Penobscot Indians. Faced with a variety of challenges, including a complete lack of training in either English or Abnaki (the Penobscot language), Bapst adapted quickly during his first years in Maine. With the help of a French-speaking Penobscot woman, Bapst developed a basic knowledge of Abnaki and within months of his arrival had learned enough Abnaki to minister to the people of Old Town. With his new skills, he was soon hearing confessions, working to establish a temperance society, and acting to facilitate a settlement between rival factions within the tribe.[6]

After three years in Old Town, Bapst relocated to Eastport, Maine, to minister to the established French Canadian and growing Irish immigrant populations in the region. Joined in his efforts by two other Jesuits, John Force (Voors) and Hippolyte De Neckere, Bapst and his confreres faced a daunting geographic challenge. Their territory spanned hundreds of miles from Eastport to Waterville and encompassed the parishes of eight churches and thirty-three chapels—some 9000 Catholics—and included the Passamaquoddy people at nearby Pleasant Point. In 1852 alone, Bapst performed 110 baptisms and officiated at twenty marriages. Bapst's travels were nearly constant—answering sick calls, making financial appeals to aid in the construction of churches, giving instruction to those seeking to convert, overseeing Sunday schools, and founding temperance societies throughout the state.[7]

Despite the challenges of his assignment, Bapst met with a great deal of success. As a result of his temperance efforts, local Protestant officials in Waterville and Skowhegan, citing a downturn in alcohol consumption in their communities, repeatedly asked the Jesuit to establish permanent residence in their towns. Bapst noted that "the Protestant magistrates themselves . . . reward me with great favor and are making every possible effort to effect my permanent residence in their midst." Included in the proffered invitations was generous aid from "many of the most distinguished" Protestants in the Waterville region and support for the construction of a Catholic church. Bapst was convinced that, with a better command of the English language, he would be able to "dispel the rest of their prejudices, to awaken their slumbering consciences and to effect, perhaps, a veritable

6. McGreevy, *American Jesuits and the World*, pp. 28–32; Raymond Schroth, *The American Jesuits: A History* (New York, 2007) and Anatole Baillargeon, "Father John Bapst and the Know-Nothing Movement in Maine" (M.A. thesis, University of Ottawa, 1950), pp. 27–31.

7. Baillargeon, "Father John Bapst and the Know-Nothing Movement in Maine," pp. 36–38.

religious revolution." All of this was facilitated, Bapst wrote to a friend in Europe, by "the bright side of American liberty." He believed that "I could preach the doctrines of the Catholic religion in the most Protestant town, before an audience entirely of Protestants, and I feel sure that I would not suffer a single interruption." Buoyed by these successes, Bapst eventually turned his attention to Ellsworth.[8]

Because of the town's central location among nearly a dozen Catholic missions in the state, Bapst wrote to his Provincial Charles Stonestreet, S.J., in September 1852 calling for a "good preacher who speaks good English and who is above all a virtuous man," to be stationed at Ellsworth to establish an additional mission.[9] The Provincial acceded and in January 1853, Bapst took up residence in Ellsworth. Bapst's reputation likely preceded him to Ellsworth as one of the local newspapers, the *Ellsworth Freeman,* noted his arrival and declared, "We are glad to give Mr. B. a good welcome as we doubt not his labors will result in much good to the flock of his charge and be a great moral benefit to the village."[10] The Jesuit rented a small house at the edge of town and began his work. Bapst's arrival coincided with a period of growth for Ellsworth's Catholic population, which had long since outgrown the small building that had served as their site of worship and had already begun preparation for the construction of a new church. One of Bapst's first tasks in his new town was to help oversee the construction of the new church to house their expanding population. In the earliest days of Bapst's tenure in Ellsworth, there was no reason to expect that the success he had experienced in Waterville and Skowhegan would not be replicated in Ellsworth. The warm welcome for the Jesuit missionary would, however, be short-lived—with tensions over the version of the Bible that was to be used in the Ellsworth public schools drawing the community into a contentious debate that would devolve into violence.[11]

* * *

Chaney, in contrast, was a native of Maine. Born in the town of Chesterville, just west of Waterville, Chaney endured a difficult childhood

8. Letter from John Bapst to Charles Billet, April 27, 1850, *Woodstock Letters*, 17, (Woodstock, MD, 1888), pp. 363–67.

9. Letter from John Bapst to Charles Stonestreet , S.J, September 12, 1852, *Woodstock* Letters, 18 (1889), 90-91; McGreevy, *American Jesuits and the World*, pp. 36–37; Schroth, *The American Jesuits*, p. 74.

10. *Ellsworth* [ME] *Freeman*, January 14, 1853, 1.

11. *Woodstock Letters,* 17 (1888), pp. 361–72. Bapst was also joined briefly by the priest Augustin Kennedy who was called away to serve at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA, within weeks of his arrival in Ellsworth.

following the death of his father in 1830 in a sledding accident. At age nine, Chaney bounced between the homes of several different relatives and neighbors, developing a reputation as a surly and combative child. At age sixteen, Chaney set out on his own, finding work on a fishing schooner in Penobscot and Frenchman Bays. After two years aboard the fishing vessel, Cheney enlisted in the navy but, in July 1840, deserted the receiving ship, *Columbus,* in Boston Harbor after only nine months of service. Following his desertion, Chaney lit out for the American West. He envisioned himself as a "refugee, a price set on my head, every man's hand against me." Although initially intending to head for New Orleans, Chaney made it as far as Ohio before falling ill and finding himself without options: "I counted my money—$1.27; had no baggage—not even a spare shirt; sick and in a strange land; not yet twenty years old—really my prospects looked gloomy."[12]

The people of Sciota Furnace, Ohio, came to Cheney's aid, nursing him back to health and helping him to obtain a teaching position in Porter Township in early 1841. In the wake of this kindness, Cheney reimagined his future and gave over his life as a refugee to a life of self-improvement. He spent the next few months scraping by, often "boarding around" with the families of his students, before meeting rich Virginian Ephraim Pollock, who recommended Cheney to Morgan Nelson, a wealthy lawyer and city councilor in Wheeling. Based on Pollock's recommendation, Nelson took Chaney in and offered him room and board while he read law under Nelson's guidance. In addition to his studies, Chaney was an active member of his new community, writing poems and essays for the *Wheeling Times and Advertiser* and taking an interest in Whig politics.[13]

After he completed his studies and was admitted to the bar, Chaney moved to Burlington, Iowa, in September 1846. After a rocky start that involved his mishandling of several criminal cases (including one criminal defendant who was allowed toescape Chaney's custody), Chaney settled into his new home, receiving an appointment as city recorder in July 1850, serving as secretary of the Burlington Hook and Ladder Company, and participating in a Burlington mass meeting to support the Compromise of 1850. Although he lost his bid for re-election as city recorder, the city

12. William Chaney, *Chaney's Primer of Astrology and American Urania: Old Rules Simplified, New Rules Added. With Improved Nomenclature and Numerous Tables Never Before Published* (St. Louis, 1890). See also Allan R. Whitmore, "Portrait of a Maine 'Know-Nothing': William H. Chaney, His Early Years and His Role in the Nativist Controversy 1853–1854," *Maine Historical Society Quarterly*, 14 (1974), 1–57.

13. *Ibid.*

council appointed him city solicitor the following spring. In July 1851 Chaney married a local woman, Jane McGeary. For the briefest of moments, it seemed as though Chaney had finally found a place for himself in the world; however, it was not to last.

Within only a matter of months, Chaney's life again seemed to come apart. At the end of September, his wife fell ill. Within a matter of days, she died, mostly likely of cholera. Only a month later, following a failed defense of the city in a civil suit, the city council removed Chaney from his office as solicitor. His world crumbling, Chaney left Iowa to return to Maine where he responded to an advertisement by Charles Lowell of Ellsworth, who was looking for a law associate. The partnership of Lowell and Chaney began officially on May 1, 1852, but was unstable from the start. Professionally, Chaney disdained legal precedent and the profession as a whole, and his courtroom manner led Judge J. W. Hathaway to interrupt Chaney during an argument to a jury, noting, "it is a filthy bird that fouls its own nest." The partnership dissolved after only five months, with each man deciding to pursue an independent career.[14]

Although Chaney continued to practice law after the fall of the partnership, his legal training had been unsystematic and largely self-directed, and he had never developed a sense of professional etiquette. Rather than work within the existing system, Chaney sought to find ways to reform the legal system. He declared the grand jury to be a "humbug" relic of medieval ignorance and argued that irresponsible prosecutors, jurors, and witnesses could destroy even an innocent person's reputation. Not surprisingly, Chaney's practice foundered, and he was forced to take up employ as a lumber store clerk, "weighing out pork, drawing molasses, and triming [sic] greasy lamps."[15]

While he took up menial work to make ends meet, Chaney—like his period in Ohio and Iowa—continued to pursue the life of the mind. He published stories in Maine and Massachusetts newspapers, regularly attended dramatic shows and lectures, and helped organize the Ellsworth Debating Club (for which he was elected secretary). Employing the connections made in these intellectual pursuits, Chaney applied for and was hired to teach in the Ellsworth school district during summer 1853. By all accounts, Chaney was an effective teacher and had a good rapport with his students; when the school committee visited Chaney's classroom, they

14. Chaney, *Chaney's Primer of Astrology and American Urania*, p. 145.
15. Whitmore, "Portrait of a Maine 'Know-Nothing,'" pp. 16–18.

were impressed by his teaching and the students' efforts. Despite this success, a new opportunity in journalism enticed Chaney to make yet another career change, as Elijah Couillard, publisher of the *Ellsworth Herald*, approached Chaney about filling an upcoming editorial position at the paper.[16]

James Belcher, pastor of Ellsworth's Baptist church, had served as editor of the *Herald* since its founding in 1851. Throughout its first two years of existence, the newspaper struggled financially, and in the face of his own failing health, Belcher decided to cut ties with what he believed to be a doomed enterprise. In the wake of Belcher's departure, Couillard turned to Chaney. Chaney initially declared that he had "no ambition or pretention as an editor"; however, he reconsidered and assumed his role with gusto. Chaney laid out an independent course for his paper, declaring the right to consider any issue and stating that he would not bow "to any party or sect—political or religious." He also declared that the *Herald* would "never consent to their [sic] being used as a medium for personal abuse, crimination or recrimination, or a means whereby one party or sect may vent its spleen upon another, and thus stir up our citizens to strife and dissention."[17]

From the first, Chaney's editorial efforts seemed to embody the reform impulse that would be at the heart of the Know-Nothing movement. Chaney's ability to tap into this emerging popular sentiment drew the notice of John Shannon Sayward, the editor of the *Bangor Courier*, who remarked that "the new editor [of the *Herald*] has a sprightliness and force—is a live man and will jump into the current of time where he finds it, and give his energies to the popular impulses."[18] Part of Chaney's energy seemed to stem from the opportunity the paper provided to challenge and reform the power of established institutions. Echoing his iconoclastic efforts in the legal profession, Chaney criticized the formal procedures and etiquette of American society, condemning the legal and medical professions, journalism, religion, and government officials. Chaney's impulsiveness and temper, however, also led him to mistake the bold editorial comment and banter of contemporary newspapers for malicious character assassination. In the face of this misperception, his energy could not make up for a lack of experience. After only two months as editor of the *Herald*, Chaney stepped down in late August 1853 to the role of associate editor.[19]

16. *Ibid*., pp. 21–22.
17. *Ellsworth* [ME] *Herald*, October 1, 1852, 1.
18. *Bangor* [ME] *Courier*, June 14, 1853, 1.
19. Whitmore, "Portrait of a Maine 'Know-Nothing,'" pp. 25–26.

Although Chaney's editorial replacement was announced publicly as George S. Raymond, the new editor informed his associates that his real name was "Don Carlos R. Kearney," that he was the son of a commodore in the United States Navy, and that he had been a revolutionary in South America. Chaney believed that the worldly Kearney could be a worthy and competent editor. He soon discovered, however, that Kearney's real name was not any of the monikers that he had assumed but instead was Charles R. Ketchum. He was a bigamist and con man. As the story of Raymond/Kearney/Ketchum's identity fraud broke in Maine papers, the new editor fled to Boston. Only a month after stepping down, the inexperienced Chaney was back in the editor's chair of a financially struggling newspaper that was accepting subscriptions paid in "butter, eggs, potatoes, apples, beans, poultry, and in fact anything that can be used in a family."[20]

Once again at the helm of the *Ellsworth Herald*, Chaney returned to his iconoclast vitriol. What began as an airing of grievances between Chaney, writing in the *Herald,* and his former law partner Charles Lowell, writing for Ellsworth's *Eastern Freeman,* soon erupted into a full-scale conflict between the Ellsworth newspapers. The back-and-forth left each side accusing the other of "low and vulgar behavior." By fall 1853, Chaney again found himself on the margins of local society, engaged in a metaphorical shouting match with all of those around him. Yet even as it seemed that Chaney's personality might doom both his personal and professional prospects, Chaney's distinct editorial perspective found new purchase in a brewing scandal centered on the use of the Bible in the Ellsworth public schools.[21]

* * *

Much as Chaney worked to establish a place for himself in Ellsworth society through his efforts with groups such as the Ellsworth Debating Club, Bapst worked to make his presence felt in a series of public debates of his own. Upon his arrival in Ellsworth in January 1853, the Jesuit missionary had begun a series of Sunday afternoon lectures on the doctrine of the Catholic Church. The lectures were well attended not only by the town's Catholic population but also by a number of curious local Protestants who had come to see what "could be said in defense of a religious system which in their opinion had long before been thoroughly exploded." According to Bapst, the attendees included several young women from prominent local families, who found his message so persuasive that they

20. *Ellsworth* [ME] *Herald*, October 21, 1853, 1.
21. *Eastern* [Ellsworth, ME] *Freeman*, September 16, 1853, 1.

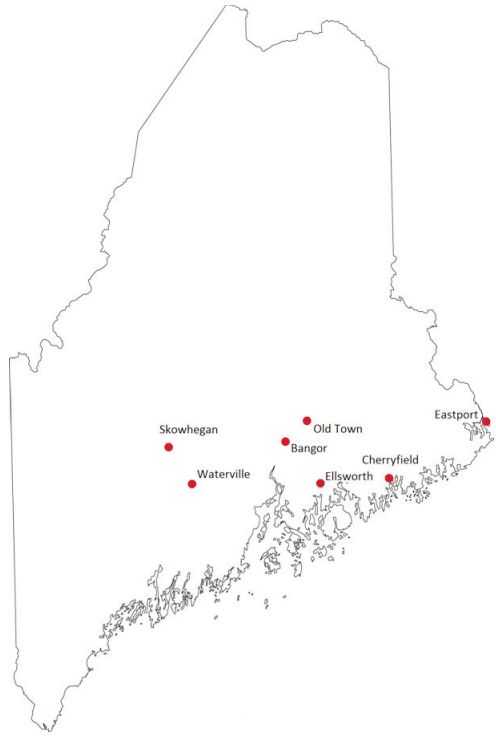

FIGURE 2. Map of Maine indicating the places mentioned in the article.

converted to Catholicism. These conversions proved unsettling to a number of local Protestant ministers, who denounced Bapst from their pulpits, warning him to stop his work of proselytizing and "of reducing free-born Americans to Rome's galling yoke." Simultaneously, Bapst's successful proselytization efforts and his work in helping to build the new church in Ellsworth emboldened the Catholic population to take a stand against policies traditionally accepted by them, such as the use of the King James Bible in public schools, which laid the foundation for the nativist, anti-Catholic explosion that was to follow.[22]

Prior to 1853, all of Ellsworth's public school students had made use of the Protestant King James Bible in their class work. On the eve of the new school year, in the late summer of 1853, Bapst actively encouraged

22. "Fr. Bapst's Narrative," *Woodstock Letters* , 18 (1889), p. 133.

Ellsworth's Catholic families to have their children refrain from using the Protestant Bible. In the face of these refusals some of Ellsworth's teachers simply excused their Catholic students from participating in the reading exercises; others, however, were more stringent and demanded that their students participate in all class exercises. By October, the Ellsworth School Committee had weighed in on the nascent controversy, declaring that all students must use only the King James Bible or leave the school. Bapst reacted bitterly to the news, writing to his provincial that the School Committee had created this new rule "out of bigotry." In response to the committee's official policy, Bapst collected more than one hundred signatures calling for an end to the Bible policy, laying them before the committee. The school officials rejected the petition, declaring that the all students were to "read the Protestant Bible or be dismissed from the schools; and should we find them loafing around the wharves we will clap them into jail." School officials, led by committee spokesman Seth Tisdale, made good on their threat when on November 14, following a visit to the city's largest school, they expelled sixteen Catholic students who refused to participate in the Bible reading. [23]

In the face of the mass expulsion, Bapst organized a Catholic school in the old chapel and hired a teacher to oversee the students' education. The family of one student, Bridget Donahoe, billed the state of Maine for her tuition and followed with a lawsuit against the Ellsworth School Committee when the state failed to deliver. The Donahoe lawsuit raised the issue of both public funding for parochial education and the right of non-Protestant students to refuse instruction from the King James Bible. The suit reflected ongoing national debates about public funding for religious education and the use of the King James Bible in the classroom. Debates over the use of public funds for Catholic schools had begun a decade earlier in immigrant hubs like New York and Philadelphia, and, by the 1850s, had spread throughout the United States as immigrant numbers increased. In 1853 alone, the "school question" became the "all-absorbing topic" of the spring elections in Cincinnati. In Detroit, Whigs and Democrats joined together to resist the bishop's request for state funding for parochial schools. The Indiana state legislature passed a bill prohibiting the use of public funds for parochial schools, with similar legislation nearly passing in the New York state legislature.[24]

---

23. John Bapst, S.J., to Charles Stonestreet, S.J., October 1853, cited in Baillargeon, "Father John Bapst and the Know-Nothing Movement in Maine," p. 43.

24. Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery,* pp. 24–25.

FIGURE 3. Political Cartoon from the *Ellsworth Herald,* February 24, 1854, entitled "John Bapst, S.J., Catholic Priest of Ellsworth, Closes the Door of the Public School against the Children of Papists."

In all cases, the cause of public funding for parochial schools and the right of non-Protestants to refuse the use of the King James Bible proved to be a losing one. In *Donahoe v. Richards*, the Maine Supreme Court ruled in favor of the defendant, refusing to "subordinate the state to the individual conscience." Furthermore, writing for the court, Chief Justice John Appleton noted that "if the common version of the Bible is to be objected because of denominational objections, so might the works of Locke, Bacon, Newton and Galileo."[25] The precedent set in the Donahoe case, declaring that a student might be expelled for refusing to read a text regardless of a student's religious views, would be in effect until 1890, when the *Edgerton* case in Wisconsin finally elevated the rights of conscience of a minority group over the traditional religious practices of the majority.[26]

25. Daniel Piar, "Majority Rights, Minority Freedoms: Protestant Culture, Personal Autonomy, and Civil Liberties in Nineteenth Century America," *William and Mary Bill of Rights Journal*, 14 (2006), 1016–107.

26. Thomas C. Hunt, "The Edgerton Bible Decision: The End of an Era," *The Catholic Historical Review*, 67 (1981), 589–619.

As the Donahoe case made its way through the courts, the members of the Ellsworth School Committee placed blame for the entire incident on "Mr. Bapst." The committee members declared that the Jesuit was "responsible for the agitation of this subject, and all of the evil that has resulted." Prior to the arrival of "the Rev. Mr. Bapst, a Catholic priest, of the order of the Jesuits," they argued, "all was undisturbed harmony on this subject." Worse still, they contended,

> He is a foreigner by birth, education, and allegiance. Under his dictation a portion of our fellow citizens have deprived their children of the benefits of our schools, many of them stating to us that they themselves had no objection to the rule we have retained in reference to the Bible.[27]

In responding to these charges, Bapst attempted to reduce the question "to its simplest expression," seemingly banking on his faith in "the bright side of American liberty" that had arisen from his earlier experiences with Maine officials in places like Waterville and Skowhegan. Writing in the *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier,* he questioned:

> Has the School Committee the constitutional power to force on the Catholic children the reading of a version of the Bible, which is forbidden by their Church and their conscience, and in case of refusal, to dismiss them, for that reason alone? If the Committee has such a power under the Constitution, then the Committee is right and the Catholics are wrong. But if the Committee has no such power, then the Catholics are right, and the Committee is answerable for the whole agitation.—But the question has not yet been decided by a competent tribunal. Therefore let us wait.

Ultimately, of course, Bapst was to be disappointed by the ruling. Yet even before the constitutional issue was decided, tensions in Ellsworth would reach new heights.[28]

Initially, it appeared as though the Bible controversy might simply be allowed to resolve itself in the courts as Bapst had hoped. Chaney's initial reaction to the dispute mirrored that of Bapst in calling for restraint. Chaney's *Herald* offered only limited coverage of the Bible controversy, reprinting accounts from the *Belfast Journal* and the *Augusta Age* along with

---

27. The school committee remarks were reprinted in the *Bangor* [ME] *Daily Whig and Courier*, December 24, 1853, 1.

28. Bapst's response to the committee appeared in the *Bangor* [ME] *Daily Whig and Courier*, January 5, 1854, 1. On the "bright side of American liberty," see Bapst's letter to Billet, (1888), pp. 362–76.

an extended statement by the superintendent of public instruction in New York, who declared that no child should be forced to read a particular version of the Bible in school.[29] In a November editorial Chaney went so far as to urge calm from all sides, noting that "the discussion of any sectarian question, through the columns of a newspaper, never yet did any good, but in our opinion has always resulted in evil." He hoped that "like a little fire," the controversy "may be easily extinguished if taken in time, but if left to itself will soon kindle into a devouring flame."[30] These early calls for restraint, however, were soon replaced by a far more vitriolic tone as violence erupted on both sides of the controversy.

Within days of Chaney's call for calm, someone broke into a schoolhouse on the western side of town and destroyed fourteen King James Bibles. This act of vandalism was followed by name calling and threats of violence by Catholics against members of the Ellsworth School Committee. In the face of this Catholic violence, Chaney changed his tone, declaring the "Catholic Bible Question" part of an elaborate Roman Catholic conspiracy to undermine the American republic. The School Committee defended its actions and placed blame for the Catholic violence on Bapst in a letter to the *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*. The Jesuit was quick to respond to the newspaper attacks, counseling patience and declaring that the charges leveled against him were entirely false.[31]

The Jesuit's response, however, only seemed to agitate Chaney further. The editor of the *Herald* would later admit that "when angered . . . my voice is loud and harsh my features become rigid, my little eyes set and seem to glow with the fierceness of a demon more than a human." Furthermore, Chaney declared, "I hold that a compromise implies a surrender of something that should be retained." Within a matter of weeks, an issue that Chaney had argued should remain out of the columns of a newspaper had become a personal crusade splashed across the pages of his publication.[32]

In addition to his concern for the future of the Republic, Chaney's change of heart may have resulted in part from financial concerns. The

---

29. For Chaney's coverage of the controversy, see *Ellsworth Herald*, December 9, 1853, 1; December 23, 1853, 1.

30. *Ellsworth Herald*, November 11, 1853, 1.

31. Chaney's editorial appears in the *Ellsworth Herald* of December 9, 1853, January 6, 1854, and January 13, 1854. The school committee's letter is published in the *Bangor* [ME] *Daily Whig and Courier*, January 5, 1854. *The American and Foreign Christian Union*, vol. 6 (New York, 1855), p. 17. McGreevy, *American Jesuits and the World,* pp. 40–41.

32. Chaney, *Chaney's Primer of Astrology and American Urania*, pp. 123, 147.

Eastern Freeman noted that, during its initial restraint in covering the Bible controversy, the *Herald* was losing nativist subscribers at a rate of six to fourteen per day. The editors at the *Freeman* surmised that this decline had played a key role in the development of Chaney's anti-Catholic position, chiding, "Friend Chaney, you are not the first zealot that love of filthy lucre has made."[33] Yet, if increasing circulation was a factor Chaney's efforts, it was only a part of the Chaney's growing zealotry, as his efforts extended well beyond the pages of the *Herald*.

Beginning in late January 1854, Chaney organized a series of mass gatherings at Lord's Hall in Ellsworth to discuss the Catholic threat. At one meeting, following a series of anti-Catholic speeches given by a number of prominent members of Ellsworth society (including Chaney; Dr. Moses Pulsifer; the minister J. French; and J. S. Hawes, the principal of Ellsworth's high school), the group declared its intent to "destroy popery and everything appertinent thereto" and adopted the name the "Cast Iron Band."[34] Chaney's efforts did not end with the creation of the Band. In the weeks that followed the organization of the anti-Catholic nativist group, Chaney traveled throughout the neighboring villages of Hancock, Reed's Brook, Morgan's Bay, Blue Hill, Southwest Harbor, Surry, and Goulds-boro, speaking on behalf of the growing nativist forces gathering support-ers throughout Hancock County. In the Know-Nothing movement Chaney finally seemed to have found his place.[35]

Throughout spring 1854 Chaney's editorial efforts mirrored those of his public speaking engagements. Presenting issue after issue, Chaney railed against the Catholic threat. Employing thinly veiled satire, political car-toons, and outright attacks, Chaney decried the efforts of Bapst and the "Jack Catholics"—his label for those who supported the Jesuit, including newspapers that appeared sympathetic to Bapst's cause such as the *Bangor Mercury* and the *Ellsworth Freeman*. By April, Chaney went so far as to pub-lish a notice declaring that "1000 men [were] wanted" and issuing a call to "Protestant laborers everywhere" to "come to Ellsworth, and come quickly! for your services may yet be needed in more ways than one."[36] Chaney's call

33. *Eastern* [Ellsworth, ME] *Freeman*, February 24, 1854, 1.

34. Baillargeon, "Father John Bapst and the Know-Nothing Movement in Maine," p. 54.

35. An account of the gathering appears in the *Ellsworth Herald*, February 24, 1854, 1. Whitmore, "Portrait of a Maine 'Know-Nothing,'" pp. 33–37.

36. For Chaney's attacks on competing newspapers, see *Ellsworth Herald*, January 20, 1854, 1; February 24, 1854, 1; March 10, 1854, 1. The call for "1000 men" appeared on April 14, 1854, 1 and was reprinted in the *Boston Pilot* on May 6, 1854.

for a "1000 men" came as members of the Cast Iron Band marched through town taunting and threatening Catholics. Catholic women who worked in Protestant households daily were ridiculed and heard their employers mocking the Catholic fish-and-egg diets on Fridays and slandering Bapst. For their part, Catholics cursed Chaney in the streets, and Irish women asked God to save them from the "devil Chaney."[37]

Before long, the tension simmering in Ellsworth and environs boiled over into outright violence. In mid-April, a rumor spread throughout Ellsworth that a group of Catholics had resolved to "blot out" Chaney and his press. When the attack on the *Herald* did come, Chaney and members of the Cast Iron Band, who had been keeping watch over the press as the rumors grew, defended the newspaper building and surprised the would-be Catholic vandals. A month later, Chaney was confronted by a fist-shaking Irish-Catholic named Tim Doyle who threatened to knock Chaney's teeth down his throat. The two men squared off, and Chaney beat Doyle until spectators managed to pull the editor away. By June, Bapst became the target of Cast Iron Band violence. Initially, the mob had hoped to seize Bapst in an attack on his home on June 3. When his housekeeper informed the members of the Band that the priest was away on a sick-call, they expressed their disappointment by shattering a window with a large stone. Three days later, the mob again returned, and unaware that Bapst had returned to Ellsworth, focused its anger on the town's new church, shattering every window in the building. Following this wave of violence, the bishop, fearing for Bapst's safety, reassigned the Jesuit to Bangor and ordered that he not return to the town even for Sunday Masses.[38]

In the wake of Bapst's departure, the *Eastern Freeman* offered a review of the recent "excitement." Authored by Lowell, Chaney's former law partner, the review was as much a revival of the two men's long-running feud as it was a condemnation of the recent violence. Lowell declared that "there is no more firm and decided Protestant in America, nor an individual with less sympathy with the Catholic Faith, than the humble writer of this review." Lowell added, however, that "any religion is better than none at all," and he therefore "wishes every person to worship God according to his own con-

37. Mary A. Tincker, *The House of Yorke* (New York, 1872), pp. 128–29, Whitmore, "Portrait of a Maine 'Know-Nothing,'" pp. 39–40.

38. *Ellsworth Herald*, May 26, 1854, 1; *Eastern Freeman*, May 26, 1854, p. 1; "Fr. Bapst's Narrative," *Woodstock Letters*, 18 (1889), pp. 133–36; McGreevy, *American Jesuits and the World,* p. 26; Baillargeon, "Father John Bapst and the Know-Nothing Movement in Maine," pp. 55–56.

victions of right and duty." It was in this framework that Lowell offered his "review." In examining the root cause of the controversy, Lowell blamed a "sectarian spirit" and the "indiscrete language and temper" of leading Catholic officials; however, after the initial unsettlement, he argued that the controversy had "since been kept alive, extended, and greatly aggravated . . . by William H. Chaney." According to Lowell, Chaney's attacks had "kept up and aggravated the situation." His "prostituted press, a weak brain, and perverse spirit, have been able to impose on so many well-meaning citizens, and to excite and inflame the masses." Although Lowell certainly held a personal grudge again Chaney, his sentiments reflected the view of Ellsworth's non-nativist Protestant population.[39]

Far from bringing an end to the Cast Iron Band's activities in Ellsworth, Bapst's departure was viewed as a victory by the nativist group, sparking further violence. The activities of anti-Catholic mobs only increased in the ensuing period, with Catholics fearing to leave their homes after dark. On the night of June 13, members of the Cast Iron Band detonated a bomb on the steps of the old Catholic chapel that served as the home for the Catholic school, blowing the door from its hinges and shattering every window in the structure. This spate of increased violence drew the condemnation of many town residents, including Lowell, and the town selectmen called a meeting for July 8 at which they planned to denounce the Cast Iron Band and its supporters. Instead, the emboldened nativist band seized control of the town meeting, elected new selectmen, and passed a resolution offering Bapst

> an entire suit of new clothes such as cannot be found at the shops of any Tailor; and that when thus appareled, he be presented with a free ticket to leave Ellsworth upon the first *railroad operation* that may go into effect.

Within a month of the Jesuit's relocation, the Cast Iron Band had reached the height of its power.[40]

The following week, someone set fire to the new church, which, according to the *Eastern Freeman,* "if not timely discovered might must have proved the destruction of that building and the adjoining Catholic School." Although the nativist impulse seemed to have a firm grasp on Ellsworth and the surrounding communities, there was a growing regional backlash against the violence. The *Augusta Age* denounced the attack on the church, blaming Chaney for much of the violence and declaring that the attack was

39. *Eastern Freeman*, June 9, 1854, 1.
40. *Eastern Freeman*, July 14, 1854, 1. Emphasis in original.

the "fruit of a bitter campaign waged for months by the *Ellsworth [H]erald*." The *Bangor Mercury* echoed these sentiments, declaring that "we cannot believe that the numerous outrages in Ellsworth against the Irish Catholic population are countenanced by the people." Like their counterparts in Augusta, the editors of the *Mercury* criticized the "bitter crusade which the *Ellsworth Herald* has waged for many months." Whatever the cause, the Bangor paper declared, Ellsworth stands "disgraced in the eyes of all good citizens," particularly because the acts of violence violated the religious freedom that "is carefully protected by the constitution under which we live, and which protection has ever been regarded as the dearest right of the citizens." All of these assertions served as prelude to the peak of both the violence in Ellsworth and the backlash against it in fall 1854.[41]

* * *

In early October 1854, Bapst was called to Cherryfield, fifty miles southeast of Bangor.. Believing the nativist furor in Ellsworth to have run its course, Bapst decided to spend the night in Ellsworth (which was halfway to Cherryfield). On the evening of October 14, word spread throughout Ellsworth that the Jesuit had returned. This news elicited an immediate reaction. Local nativist leaders called a special meeting of the Cast Iron Band, while dozens of men and boys assembled in the Post Office Square. Shortly after 9:00 that evening, members of the Band donned masks, met in Post Office Square, and led the crowd through a driving rain to the Kent home where Bapst was hearing confession. Accounts vary as to what happened next. Some said that Bapst was dragged from the house by the mob; others stated that the Jesuit came of his own volition to protect the residents of the home. Either way, at long last the Cast Iron Band could make good on its selectmen's threat.

Although the mob initially debated how best to proceed, it eventually decided to follow through on the threat issued in the town meeting. Bapst was stripped of his clothes, robbed of his wallet and watch, tarred, and feathered him, with the group swearing at him. According to a Bangor newspaper, one mob members jeered, "why don't you call on your Virgin Mary for help?" Bapst then was placed on a sharp rail, carried for half a mile to the Tisdale shipyard, tossed unconscious upon the wharf. At that point, despite some calls to hang the priest, the leader of the mob called an end to the attack. A group of heavily armed Catholics who had been

41. *Eastern Freeman,* cited in Baillargeon, "Father John Bapst and the Know-Nothing Movement in Maine," p. 58; *The Augusta* [ME] *Age*, July 27, 1854, 1; *Bangor Mercury* repr. in the *Boston Pilot*, July 29, 1854, 1.

searching for Bapst since the attack rescued him, carrying him back to the Kent home. The next morning, Bapst insisted on celebrating Mass for his former parishioners before he was taken to Bangor to recover. He never would return to Ellsworth.[42]

The widespread outrage over the bombing of the Ellsworth parish church was only amplified by news of the attack on Bapst. Throughout the Northeast, newspapers decried "the Ellsworth Outrage." Initial reports as far away as western Pennsylvania suggested that Bapst had been killed in the attack as well as that the "ruffians" had stolen $50 from the priest and during the attack made "disgusting personal assaults . . . using various degrees of foul language." In Amherst, New Hampshire, the *Farmers Cabinet* reported that, before "this outrage," Bapst had "done much good among the Catholic population, and has brought about many useful reforms, winning commendation on all hands." The *Sun* in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, decried the attackers as "wretches" and expressed the hope that they would "be able to chronicle the hanging of every one of them."[43] Reaction against the attack intensified with proximity, with some of the most strident outrage coming from Bangor. The *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier* not only decried the attack as "an abominable outage" but went so far as to argue that it was an affront to the core of what it meant to be an American. The editors of the *Whig and Courier* declared that

> such outrages as this array themselves not merely against Mr. Bapst, or the church of which he is a priest, but against the laws of the land, and all the pledges of a civilized society and the securities of our Constitution and the whole spirit and aim of our system of government.

In addition to their discussion of Constitutional freedoms, the Bangor editors decried the attack as a violation of the character of all New England: "No hearty New Englander, no right minded person should think for a moment of any other weapon in a case like this than that of debate and the ballot box." Resorting to violence was "a gross and wanton outrage, for which they can have no justifiable reason, nor even a plausible excuse." If

---

42. "Outrage at Ellsworth," *Bangor* [ME] *Daily Journal,* October 17, 1854, 1.

43. "Death of the Catholic Priest Who Was Tarred and Feathered," *Washington* [PA] *Reporter,* October 25, 1854, 2, and "The Late Outrage at Ellsworth, Maine," *Washington Reporter*, November 1, 1854, 2; "The Outrage upon the Rev. Mr. Bapst," *New York Times,* October 27, 1854, p. 1; *Farmers Cabinet* [Amherst, NH], October 26, 1854, 1; *Sun* [Pittsfield, MA], October 26, 1854, 3; "The Catholic Priest That Was Tarred and Feathered and Ridden on a Rail," *Philadelphia Inquirer,* October 27, 1854, 1.

there was any threat to the Republic coming from Ellsworth, the Bangor editors believed it to be the nativist bands rather than a Catholic priest.[44] In the face of this widespread criticism the Cast Iron Band was defiant. Chaney called a meeting of the Band on the evening of October 24. The minutes of the meeting, which were widely published, provided a defense of the attack, declaring that Bapst had been "exiled by force of public opinion for his treasonable interference with our free schools" and that Bapst had brought the attack upon himself, although his "indiscretion and bravado in returning here after having made himself so exceedingly obnoxious to all respectable Protestants and lovers of their county and its glorious institutions." As for attacks on the character of the members of the Band, the group passed a resolution declaring that "we still hold ourselves as American freemen, accountable to law, and that we hurl back the charge of being 'rowdies, ruffians, and pirates' to the base source whence it emanated." Finally, according to printed accounts of the meeting, Chaney rose before the Band, speaking for "three-quarters of an hour, giving a history in short of the Roman Catholic trouble in Ellsworth, being often interrupted by the cheering of the audience, which was never larger in the hall."[45]

In the months that followed, Chaney's dedication to nativist politics continued to ensure his place in the Ellsworth community. The spirited defense of the attack on Bapst was only a beginning. His newspaper columns derided efforts to punish anyone for the attack on Bapst. As the November elections grew nearer, Chaney continued his efforts to drum up support for Know-Nothing candidates. It had been Chaney who had traveled to Boston in June 1854 to register the Hancock County chapter of the American Party; by that fall, the county had become a party stronghold in Maine. In the November 1854 elections Hancock County delivered hundreds of votes to American Party candidates, and Chaney was elected to serve as one of twenty-two state delegates representing Maine at the national convention in Cincinnati. Chaney's final act of dedication to the nativist cause in Ellsworth came in January 1855 when he purchased the *Herald* (made possible in part with loans from his cousin, Josiah Chaney, of Portland and Ellsworth nativist John True) and renamed it the *Ellsworth American*. Running under the new name on the masthead, the paper declared, "Americans can govern America without the aid of Foreign

44. "An Abominable Outrage at Ellsworth," *Bangor* [ME] *Daily Whig and Courier*, October 17, 1854, 1.

45. "Mass Meeting at Ellsworth," *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier,* October 28, 1854, 1.

Influence." Despite an initial reticence, Chaney, in taking up the nativist cause, had made himself a pillar of the Ellsworth community.[46]

Yet as the nativist wave in Maine crested and retreated, so, too, did Chaney's place in Ellsworth society. As the new Republican Party began to draw away members of the Know-Nothings, Chaney denounced those who fled the party, declaring,

> when we left the old Democratic Party it was not to return again, like a dog to his vomit, nor was it to go into the arms of the dying Whig Party, but it was to help build up a new party and adhere to it.

Those who "profess friendship with the self-styled Republican party . . . are committing adultery with the deformed nondescript."[47] Chaney's cries for loyalty went unheeded, and he began to look elsewhere for opportunities as he realized he was fighting a lost cause. Only twelve months after purchasing and renaming the *American*, Chaney left for New Bedford, Massachusetts, in December 1855, abandoning his second wife and two sons. Faced with the political adultery of Ellsworth partisans, Chaney hoped to find nativist sympathizers in Massachusetts. In February 1856, he established the Know-Nothing *New Bedford Evening Express*. As in Maine, however, the diminished nativist impulse left Chaney without much of an audience for his new endeavor, and Chaney, without any expression of embarrassment, abandoned the American Party. In a presidential election year, Chaney—keenly aware of the shifting political winds—renamed his paper the *New Bedford Express* and endorsed James Buchanan and the Democratic Party.[48]

* * *

The anti-Catholic violence in Ellsworth was not unique. Just days before the attack on Bapst, about 100 miles south of Ellsworth, the "Old South Church" in Bath, Maine, had been destroyed as the result of a series of nativist, anti-Catholic sermons delivered by John Orr, an itinerant preacher who went by the name of the Angel Gabriel. In the months that followed the attack on Bapst, scattered outbreaks of such violence occurred in places like Manchester, New Hampshire; Dorchester, Massachusetts; and Louisville, Kentucky. In Louisville on August 6, 1855,

---

46. *Ellsworth Herald*, October 20, p. 1; October 27, p. 1; November 3, p. 1; and December 28, 1855, p. 1; *Ellsworth* [ME] *American*, January 12, 1855, p. 1.

47. Cited in Herbert Silsby, "Looking Backward," *Ellsworth American* , August 22, 1996, 20.

48. Whitmore, "Portrait of a Maine 'Know-Nothing,'" pp. 44–45.

Know-Nothings inspired by nativist editorials in the *Louisville Journal* set fire to blocks of dwellings tenanted by the Irish, with entire families being roasted to death or shot as they attempted to escape. Even in Ellsworth, the final act of anti-Catholic violence occurred on April 27, 1856, with the destruction of the Catholic Church that Bapst had helped to construct three years prior.[49]

Yet, the attack on Bapst was in many ways the denouement of the vitriolic strain of Know-Nothingism that Chaney had fostered in Ellsworth and Hancock County as a whole. The public interplay between Bapst and Chaney, the Donahoe court case, the rise of the Cast Iron Band (most notably its takeover of the Ellsworth town government), and the brutality of the tarring and feathering of the Jesuit generated a great deal of public attention and helped to turn public opinion against this anti-Catholic impulse. Bapst himself believed that regret over the attack would "be extremely useful to the cause of the Church in Maine."[50] True to Bapst's expectations, the people of Bangor called a special meeting mirroring that of the Cast Iron Band's defense of the Ellsworth attack; this gathering of Bangor's Protestant population passed resolutions lauding the Jesuit for his "admirable patience," his "Christian forbearance" and his "courageous zeal" and declaring Bapst to be a "blessing" and an "honored" resident of Bangor. Following the reading of the resolutions, the chair of this meeting, "amid deafening applause," presented Bapst with a "well filled purse" and a gold watch to replace the timepiece that had been stolen from him during the attack. The engraving on the cover of the watch read:

TO REV. JOHN BAPST, S.J.
FROM THE CITIZENS OF BANGOR, MAINE
AS A TOKEN OF THEIR HIGH ESTEEM

In many ways, the attack in Ellsworth only helped to entrench Bapst in eastern Maine. He would remain in Bangor for another five years, overseeing the construction of St. John's Church, the largest in the state at that time. He was transferred to the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1859. During his final years in Maine, Bapst witnessed a political sea-change.

---

49. See, "Variations on a Borderlands Theme," p. 132; Baillargeon, "Father John Bapst and the Know-Nothing Movement in Maine," p. 72.

50. John Bapst to John Fitzpatrick, October 20, 1854, cited in John McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom* (New York, 2003), p. 61.

This political shift ranged from the partisan to the personal as members of Ellsworth's newly formed Republican Party—many of whom had been Know-Nothings—sought to distance themselves from the anti-Catholic violence that had gripped Ellsworth. In attempting to assign blame, the Ellsworth Republicans found their target in recently minted Democrat Chaney. The former editor of the *Herald,* now *American*, they argued, was responsible for the core of the anti-Catholic tumult and violence. Chaney, for his part, not only monitored the news from Ellsworth but also responded in his characteristic style. Writing from New Bedford, Chaney offered "A Litany for Ellsworth, Me.," in which he condemned his former town:

> May fire and brimstone never fail
> To fall in showers in Ellsworth, Maine;
> Mayall the leading fiends assail
> The thieving town of Ellsworth, Maine.
>
> May beef or mutton, lamb or veal,
> Be never found in Ellsworth, Maine,
> But garlic soup, and scurvy kail
> Be the food of Ellsworth, Maine.
>
> May fame resound a dismal tale
> When 'er she lights on Ellsworth, Maine;
> May Egypt's plagues at once prevail
> To thin the knaves of Ellsworth, Maine.
>
> May frost and snow, and sleet and hail
> Benumb each joint in Ellsworth, Maine;
> May wolves and bears trace and trail
> The cursed crew of Ellsworth, Maine.
>
> May want and woe each joy curtail,
> That e'er was found in Ellsworth, Maine;
> May no coffin want a nail
> That wraps a rogue in Ellsworth, Maine.
>
> Oh! may my couplets never fail
> To find a curse for Ellsworth, Maine;
> And may grim Pluto's inner goal
> Forever groan with Ellsworth, Maine.[51]

51. William Chaney, "A Litany for Ellsworth, Me," *New Bedford* [MA] *Evening Express,* April 8, 1856, 1. Somewhat ironically, Chaney's poem was republished in Boston's Catholic newspaper, the *Boston Pilot*, on April 19, 1856.

The former Ellsworth editor went on to distance himself from the violence in a series of editorials in his Massachusetts newspaper, pointing to his initial calls for calm in the *Herald* when the Bible controversy had first erupted, neglecting all of the vitriol and rage that would follow. Rather than accepting blame, he denounced the people of Ellsworth and argued that he had "a clear record in reference to the Ellsworth outrage."[52]

By 1856, many of the former members of the Cast Iron Band were fleeing from the legacy of the once-powerful group. Although larger xenophobic, populist, and reform forces were in play throughout the United States driving the rise of the Know-Nothing movement, it was the role of individuals driving this latent impulse to the heights of violence and these acts of violence that alienated many would-be supporters. For Chaney, his 1856 endorsement of Democrat James Buchanan marked the final turn from his Know-Nothing advocacy and an end to the height of his political influence—he would spend the rest of his life attempting to find a place for himself before dying in Chicago in 1903.[53]

By way of contrast, Bapst continued the work he started in Maine for much of his life. Unlike Chaney, who abandoned his populist efforts following the collapse of the Know-Nothings, Bapst continued to employ a populist approach in advancing his Catholic missionary work in the United States. Key to these efforts was an active interest in Catholic education with a specific goal of engaging Americans of every faith. Following his time at the College of the Holy Cross, Bapst went on to serve as the first president of Boston College. As president of the newly established college, Bapst declared that "our zeal should not be restricted to the Catholics alone, but should be extended to all." Reflecting his own missionary approach, he argued that scholastics at Boston College should be actively educated in the issues of the day, if only to be able to answer directly Protestant objections to the Catholic faith. Failure to train scholastics to engage in such dialogue would leave them "to the past," making them "strangers to the present," and prevent them from engaging in their work.[54]

As Superior of the New York and Canada Mission, Bapst wrote Jesuit Superior General Peter Jan Beckx in 1870, supporting the creation of a

52. *New Bedford Evening Express,* August 16, 1856, 1; September 9, 1856, 1. Whitmore, "Portrait of a Maine 'Know-Nothing,'" pp. 45–46.

53. Whitmore, "Portrait of a Maine 'Know-Nothing,'" p. 46.

54. Chestnut Hill, MA, Burns Library, Boston College, John Bapst to Fr. Angelo Paresce, January 29, 1863, John Bapst Papers, Box 1, Folder 7; McGreevy, *American Jesuits and the World*, pp. 59–62.

new college in Jersey City, New Jersey. "Conditions there," Bapst declared, "will soon make it one of the most important cities in the union." A college "situated in the central part of the city and easily accessible" could serve the growing immigrant population. Despite the many challenges facing the Jesuits in America, Bapst continued to recognize the opportunities available to the Jesuits in the United States and the level of engagement required to realize those opportunities. By 1879, Bapst's mental and physical health was failing, and he left his post. He ultimately resided at Mount Hope Retreat near Baltimore where he died in 1887.[55]

* * *

For both Bapst and Chaney, the populist impulse that marked American politics in the turbulent decade of the 1850s proved a moment of opportunity. Each man worked in his own way to take advantage of this climate. For Bapst, it meant engaging Catholics and Protestants throughout Maine in an effort to spread the Catholic faith. For Chaney, it meant riding the wave of Know-Nothing politics in an effort to secure a place for himself in coastal Maine society. The efforts of both men ultimately became entangled in local and national politics. At the peak of their entanglement, Chaney and his supporters, in a fit of populist outrage, resolved that Bapst be tarred, feathered, and ridden out of town on a rail. Although the Band ultimately made good on this threat, the violence marked the beginning of the end for its movement, which Chaney himself would disavow only a few years later. For Bapst, the widespread outrage that followed the attack provided evidence that his popular outreach could succeed eventually. The Ellsworth attack, far from ending Bapst's missionary efforts, only served to reinforce his resolve to strengthen the place of Catholics in United States by engaging the people of the young nation.

55. John Bapst to Jesuit Superior General Peter Jan Beckx, cited in Schroth, *The American Jesuits*, pp. 75–76; "Father John Bapst. A Sketch," *Woodstock Letters,* 20 (1891), pp. 409–11; McGreevy, *American Jesuits and the World*, pp. 59–62.