RHODE ISLAND HISTORY

VOLUME 36: 3 AUGUST 1977

RIHS Library

Crowds gathered in Woonsocket, R.I., June 24, 1900 for the festivities marking St. John's Day, a French-Canadian national holiday.

RHODE ISLAND HISTORY

Published by
THE RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
52 POWER STREET, PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND
02906 and printed by a grant of the
STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE
PLANTATIONS, J. Joseph Garrahy, Governor.

Duncan Hunter Mauran, *president*
Dennis E. Stark, *vice president*
James F. Twaddell, *vice president*
David W. Dumas, *secretary*
Talbot Rantoul, *assistant secretary*
George H. Cicma, *treasurer*
John H. Drury, *assistant treasurer*
Albert T. Klyberg, *director*
Clifford P. Monahon, *director emeritus*

Carl Bridenbaugh, *fellow of the Society*

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE
Stuart C. Sherman, *chairman*
Henry L.P. Beckwith, Jr.
Mrs. Philip Davis
Wendell D. Garrett
Charles E. Neu
Norman W. Smith
Gordon S. Wood

STAFF
Nancy Fisher Chudacoff, *editor*
Noel P. Conlon, *managing editor*
Marsha Peters, *picture editor*

ISSN: 0035-4619

Issued Quarterly at Providence, Rhode Island, February, May, August, and November. Second class postage paid at Providence, Rhode Island.

The Rhode Island Historical Society assumes no responsibility for opinions of contributors.

Table of Contents

Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) —
Religion and Militant Survivance in
Woonsocket, Rhode Island
by Richard S. Sorrell 67

Eben Tourjée's Rhode Island Roots
by Edward J. FitzPatrick 81

Political Loyalty in Rhode Island —
A Computer Study of the 1850s
by Mario R. DiNunzio and Jan T. Galkowski 93

From the Collections 96

VOLUME 36 NUMBER 3 AUGUST 1977

Rhode Island History (1942-) and its predecessors *Rhode Island Historical Society Collections* (1918-1941) and *Publications Rhode Island Historical Society* (1893-1901) are available in microform from Xerox University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. (313) 761-4700. Please write for complete information. Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in *Historical Abstracts* and *America: History and Life*.

RIHS Library

Post card views of Woonsocket, R.I. in the decade following the Sentinelle Affair.

Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) — Religion and Militant Survivance in Woonsocket, Rhode Island

*by Richard S. Sorrell**

The struggle is dead only for those who are dead — Elphège Daignault, leader of Sentinelles.

We are Catholics for salvation, but French Canadians only by accident of birth — J. Albert Foisy, moderate Franco-American opposed to Daignault.

It is not the blood in one's veins that makes the Catholic, but it is belief in a doctrine and submission — Bishop William Hickey of Providence, archenemy of Sentinelles.

The Sentinelle affair deserves study not merely because it happened, even though the tale contains its share of dramatic incidents. Such drama, considered in isolation, might be but a "tempest in a teapot." The affair's claim for attention derives from the interrelationship of Sentinellism with related topics: Franco-Americans as an ethnic group, Woonsocket as a community, and the question of militant *survivance*. The history of both Canada and the United States reveals many serious questions about topics such as ethnicity, nationalism, assimilation, and religion. These are often handled in an overly simplified fashion, sometimes approaching an "either-or" syndrome (either a person is viewed as an immigrant dominated by national background and homeland religion, or seen as becoming assimilated into a new nationalism and differing religious ways). By taking a look at such questions within a specific context, it is possible to examine them more deeply and see that they possess an undreamed-of complexity. Here the specific context is French Canadian immigrants and their descendents in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, who became immersed during the 1920s in the controversial Sentinelle affair. What is conventionally thought to be a relatively simple model of immigration-assimilation becomes an intricate interaction of assimilation, religion, and nationalism, proceeding on multiple interwoven levels.

In the years following World War I a group of Franco-Americans in New England, most notably in Woonsocket, became increasingly militant concerning the state of their ethnic and religious survival. These first and second generation French Canadian immigrants feared that their *survivance* — which their ancestors in Quebec had fought so long to attain and maintain — was being threatened.[1] Led by Elphège Daignault of Woonsocket, these militant Franco-Americans called themselves Sentinelles, believing that they had to be constantly "on the watch" for assimilationist dangers. They increasingly identified the principal "Americanizing" threat to be the Irish hierarchy of the Roman Catholic church. They felt that the Irish took advantage of their dominant position within the church by attempting to force later-arriving Catholic immigrant groups, who unlike the Irish did not speak English, to quickly assimilate and Americanize themselves. Daignault et al. also distrusted increasing centralization of diocesan activities, which they felt threatened the autonomy and influence of individual Franco-American parishes. Sentinelles viewed both of these policies as part of a long-standing desire on the part of the hierarchy to eliminate all vestiges of "national" parishes.

By 1924 the battle had begun in earnest, as Daignault and his followers established their

*Mr. Sorrell is a member of the American Civilization Team at Brookdale Community College, Lincroft, New Jersey.

newspaper, *La Sentinelle*, in Woonsocket and began to gather support in other Franco-American centers in New England. They refused to contribute to diocesan fund drives of Bishop William Hickey, particularly for the new Catholic high school in Woonsocket, Mount St. Charles. Although this *collège* had been built primarily for the use of Franco-American youth, Sentinelles claimed that it was being used by Hickey, an Irish-American, to further assimilationist goals. Sentinelles wanted a school solely for Franco-Americans, with *survivance* goals and French as the dominant language of instruction. Hickey envisaged an institution where Franco-Americans, although in the majority, would mingle with other groups and, through a bilingual atmosphere, combine a respect for their heritage with preparation for life in an American environment. What one considered a virtue, the other saw as a fault.

Absolute equality of French and English was a minimum demand of Sentinelles. Mount St. Charles was not the unilingual product of assimilationist fanatics. There was a genuine attempt to provide for teaching and usage of French. However there is little doubt that English dominated both inside and outside the classroom. A great majority of Mount St. Charles' students were Franco-American. The problem was that Sentinelles wanted exclusivity rather than a majority.

Sentinelles also thought of Mount St. Charles as a diocesan institution which the bishop was using to further centralization at the expense of the individual parish. Franco-Americans could never really control the destiny of the school since it did not belong to a Franco-American parish. Whether or not the school was bilingual at any given time was unimportant, since Sentinelles saw the bishop as free to Anglicize it whenever he pleased. In addition they argued that the diocese should discontinue its practice of assessing each parish an obligatory quota in fund drives, and they demanded that the French language have at least an equal footing with English in all Franco-American parish schools.[2]

Tactics of Sentinelles became increasingly aggressive from 1924-1927. They petitioned the Pope in an attempt to halt the accepted practice by which each diocese took a percentage of its parishes' funds. When the Pope backed Bishop

Guide Officiel des Franco-Americains, 1931

Elphege Daignault.

Hickey, Sentinelles instituted a civil suit and began a boycott of all contributions to the Church, including pew rent.

The struggle in Woonsocket reached its apex in 1927-1928. On one Sunday Holy Family parish priests refused entry to anyone who would not pay pew rent, and they used Woonsocket city police to supervise this process. The curé of St. Louis parish was suspended and then dismissed by the bishop, for supposed Sentinelle leanings. An aged Sentinelle was refused last rites by the church until he repented, with opponents and advocates of Sentinellism keeping a continuous watch over his death bed. Both sides claimed victory after his death, Sentinellistes saying he had not repented and opponents insisting he did. Sentinelles charged that some Franco-American parish priests refused confession and communion to known leaders of the movement who were not paying pew

rent. These and other incidents resulted in much acrimonious name-calling and occasional physical violence. Both priests and laity were participants, while the battleground included pulpit, confessional, and communion rail. *La Sentinelle* attacked Bishop Hickey as a "Judas," and those Franco-American priests who supported him as "traitors" to their race. One of these priests responded by labeling Sentinelles as "jackasses, pigs and drunkards." *La Tribune*, Woonsocket organ of those Franco-Americans who opposed Sentinellism, called Daignault and his followers "Satanic Bolsheviks" and "Sacco-Vanzetti anarchists."

For over a year Daignault attracted a large and vociferous Franco-American following. They attended his public protest meetings, contributed to fund raising drives, and boycotted Masses in their home parishes while attending a parish in a nearby town headed by a Franco-American priest friendly to Sentinellism. However the culmination came in April 1928 when the Pope excommmunicated all Sentinelles who signed the civil suit. This dramatic event chimed the death knell of the movement. Even militantly rebellious Franco-Americans like Daignault, who were caustic critics of some of Catholicism's practices, felt a profound fear when confronted with the spectre of being cast out from their church. Within a year all had repented and excommunications were lifted.

The Catholic Church in Rhode Island by Rev. Thomas F. Cullen

Bishop William Hickey.

This five year battle (1924-1929) greatly agitated Franco-Americans and other Catholics in Woonsocket, as well as elsewhere in Rhode Island and New England. The struggle was almost entirely Catholic, involving conflict between Franco-Americans and a predominantly Irish church hierarchy. A further intriguing aspect is the split which the affair caused within Woonsocket's Franco-American community. Moderates, including almost all parish priests and most lay community leaders, insisted that loyalty to the church overrode ethnic concerns, and opposed both tactics and goals of Sentinelles. During the most troubled time (1927-1928), these two battled so violently that the conflict assumed internecine and self-destructive qualities, heightening its drama and emotional impact. Partially because of Sentinellism's bitterly fratricidal character Sentinelles failed to enlist the lasting support of a majority of Woonsocket's Franco-Americans, and thus were doomed to failure. In the long run, Sentinellism probably had a deleterious effect both on *survivance* and on the overall standing of Franco-Americans in New England.

The Sentinelle affair challenges some traditional assumptions about the ethnic life of America's white immigrant nationalities, and calls forth the image of a bubbling cauldron. Was the path towards acculturation and assimilation as straight or unhindered as is sometimes assumed? For those who feel that immigrant groups constituted homogeneous entities, or that they at least strove to present the image of a united front to the outside world, the intensity of infighting among Franco-Americans during the Sentinelle affair proves instructive. Beliefs, tactics, and goals of Sentinelle leaders indicate the prevalence of militance, often fiercely reactionary, among some

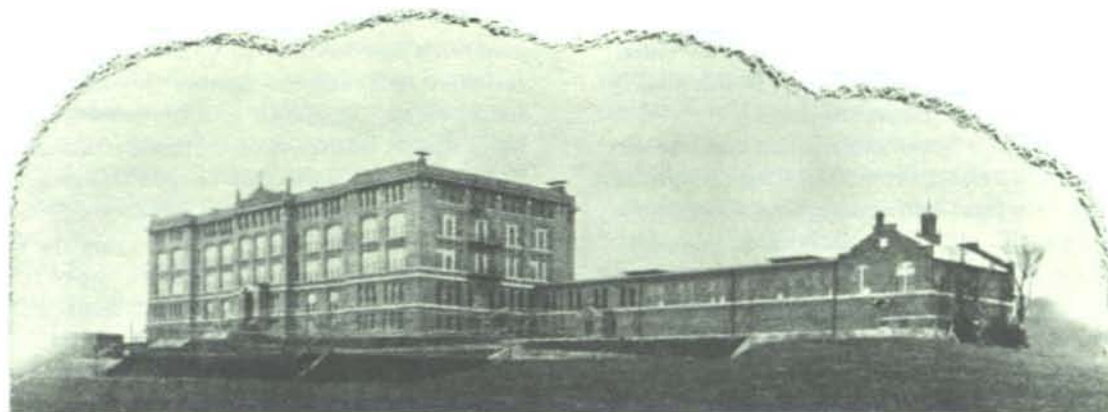
white ethnics. The vehemence of French Canadian-Irish hostility is also particularly evident. A study of Sentinellism adds an historical dimension to the "power" reawakenings of white ethnic groups in the 1970s. While this may deflate some of the current romanticizing about such "unmeltables," it also demonstrates the confining nature of the traditional framework for immigrant studies.

Sentinellism's basic claim for recognition lies in its restructuring of a "model" of the immigrant experience. Most historical or sociological models of ethnicity, whether "Anglo-conformity," "melting pot," "cultural pluralism," "structural pluralism," or "acculturation," possess a relative simplicity and wholeness of explanation.[3] Examination shows that, at least in the case of Franco-Americans in Woonsocket during the 1920s, a simple model must give way to complex interaction. The proper image might be that of a lasagna-like folding together of many layers, in which all interact but each retains something of its distinctiveness.

The first layer of experience affecting Franco-Americans in the Sentinelle affair consists of their French Canadian heritage, with its volatile and intricate mix of nationalism and religion. This heritage was not buried in antiquity, long-lost and dead, but was alive and raging in the Quebec homeland, mere hundreds of miles away. During the Sentinelle years *Québecois* battled among themselves and against outsiders over issues similar to those contained within the Sentinelle dispute. The "Francos" were also "Americans," thus adding a second layer of American experience on top of the French Canadian inheritance. To understand the motives and actions of both those Franco-Americans who became Sentinelles and those who opposed the movement, one must comprehend the legacy of their immigration process, which added threats of assimilation and nativism in a new environment. The religious problem, including the role of Franco-Americans within the Catholic church and the place of the church in society, became more complicated in the United States. A third layer of density is the specific locale in which the affair took place, that is, the effect which the industrial, religious, and ethnic milieu of Woonsocket had on the participants.

The "French connection," both Canadian and American, is the basic key to an understanding of the Sentinelle affair. Those Franco-Americans involved in the dispute were shaped by a French Canadian heritage made more immediate and influential by the closeness of the Quebec homeland and the continuing intensity of the national experience there. From 1760 to the 1920s, the issue of national survival was a constant concern in a country controlled by "outsiders." From the 1800s on, French Canadian elite were engaged in an active program of maintaining and stimulating nationalism among the masses, resisting *Anglais* encroachments while fighting among themselves over ends and means. Events of these years, from the conquest (see below) to the conscription issue of World War I (when many French Canadians resisted being drafted to fight in what they considered an *Anglais* war), shaped French Canadian national character and dominated the cultural baggage of those who emigrated to New England. Many of the attributes exhibited by Franco-Americans during the Sentinelle dispute can be seen as a direct extension of *Canadien* national character. The conquest refers to the British defeat of the French in the Seven Years War (1756-1763), the consequent cession of New France to England, and the two hundred years of British and English Canadian rule of French Canada which has followed. Historians have argued over the precise nature of this rule, but most agree that the trauma of being conquered and governed by "foreigners" has played a major role in producing French Canadian national characteristics listed in the next paragraph.[4]

Like their counterparts in the French Canadian elite, Sentinelles leaned heavily upon a traditional and often romantic view of their Quebec heritage, culminating in a virtual "cult of the past" epitomized by Quebec's motto *Je me souviens* ("I remember").[5] Daignault and his followers exhibited an extreme sense of conservative nationalism, and an obsession with national survival (*la survivance*) which is familiar to students of French Canadian history. Their sense of aloneness and enmity towards outsiders, culminating in an almost pathological insecurity, paranoia, and persecution complex, made Sentinelles the psychological heirs of French Canada. Those involved in the Sentinelle affair demonstrated further person-



Collège du Mont-Saint-Charles

WOONSOCKET, R.-I.

Guide Officiel des Franco-Americains, 1931

ality traits which are linked to French Canadian character, such as pride, imprudence, independence and lack of discipline, accompanied by a somewhat contradictory authoritarianism which could take on the messianic guise of a "search for a leader." Sentinelles surely felt that they were carrying on the French Canadian national mission.

Woonsocket however was not French Canada. The Sentinelle affair can also instruct readers as a test case of how Franco-Americans became different from their Quebec brethren. Many Franco-American religious and lay leaders struggled long and hard in the years between the Civil War and the Great Depression as they encouraged the masses to preserve their religious, ethnic, and national heritage in this strange, new land. In many ways their exhortations proved successful. Retention of the French language, intramarriage within the nationality, the building of national parishes with accompanying schools, the creation of national societies and newspapers — all were performed diligently and persistently.

Yet the means could never entirely accomplish the desired end. Franco-Americans in New England lacked the demographic, linguistic, cultural, and religious solidarity of French Canadians in Quebec, as well as the special rights and status accorded them in Canada by law and custom. If the "melting pot" of the United States was illusionary, more in the realm of myth and symbol than a reality, so was its opposing counterpart, cultural pluralism. The vision of those liberal intellectuals during the first decades of the twentieth century, who foresaw an America "in which many nationalities would live in concert, each maintaining the flavor of its original heritage and its interest in its original homeland," was also blurred.[6] The Sentinelle affair shows that if some members of a group maintained too much of an interest in their homeland and heritage, nationalities might not "live in concert." In addition the Franco-American experience shows that, for the great majority of a nationality, cultural pluralism was unattainable and not even desired by many. In no way was assimilation of Franco-Americans complete by the 1920s, in either Woonsocket or New England as a whole, whether the criterion be cultural assimilation[7] or structural.[8] By that time however Franco-Americans,

especially those who had been born in the United States, were on their way to becoming "of" America as well as "in" it, economically, politically, socially, religiously, and intellectually.

Thus in a way the Sentinelle dispute was like the "nova" phase of a star, a brief, final surge of light and energy before a final extinguishment. From this vantage point, Daignault et al. became reactionaries whose actions were the climax of a series of illusory attempts to transplant Quebec into New England. The collapse of Sentinellism merely reaffirmed the impossibility of this, and signalled the final triumph of moderate Franco-American leaders, who accepted the need for cultural assimilation and adaptation to American environment. Although they never articulated their desires, this was probably the preference of the mass of Franco-Americans by the 1920s, even if it ultimately spelled the end of *survivance*. Some of the Sentinelles may have realized this, at least subconsciously. Many of the French Canadian elite who left Quebec for New England must have had mixed feelings and a certain sense of guilt about the implication that their emigration suggested they valued economic success and a new life more than the *survivance* of Quebec. The vehemence that some displayed in attempting to transfer *survivance* to New England, evident in the Sentinelle affair, may have been partially an attempt to redeem themselves.

The issue of religion is as important as the "French connection," if one is to understand the deeper historical resonances of Sentinellism. Catholicism was not only an integral part of the participants' *Canadien* background, but also provided the basic arena within which the struggle took place. How did Catholicism affect Sentinellism, and vice-versa? It is impossible to comprehend the vehemence with which Franco-Americans on both sides of the dispute fought without knowing the importance of religion in their daily lives. Most of the Franco-American elite carried the concept of a providential mission with them from French Canada: past and future, heritage and destiny, were linked together by a divine union of nationalism and Catholicism. They were the pure Catholic nationality which would expand the kingdom of God and expose the false material values of Protestantism. Religion thus became a way of life, rather than just a part of life, as Catholicism became increasingly associated with nationalism in Quebec, and with conservative and even reactionary theological and social views. Daignault and his associates were heirs to this tradition, in both their incessant linking of *foi* (faith) and *langue* (language) and their penchant for "looking backward."

But outsiders err when they picture the Catholic Church as a monolithic force, since it frequently becomes a house divided. Sentinelles were not pious, passive, and accepting church-goers; they were constantly in rebellion against their Catholic superiors. Was not this a rejection of their French Canadian divine mission? No, for they also inherited a somewhat contradictory religious stance from Quebec, the rebellious attitude which many parishioners exhibited towards the Catholic church hierarchy there. This hierarchy, although solidly French Canadian, was forced to take an ambivalent and vacillating stand on French Canadian nationalism. This was due partially to the Church's precarious position vis-a-vis their English rulers in the years before confederation, and in part a result of the church's fear of revolutionary nationalism. Whatever the reasons, this attitude caused some French Canadians, particularly during times of crisis like the rebellion of 1837 or the *Rouge*-Guibord affair, to voice discontent with the church hierarchy and engage in decidedly "unfaithful" acts towards them. During these battles the actions and desires of rebellious French Canadians were frequently similar to those of the Sentinelles. The rebellion of 1837 took place in both Lower Canada (Quebec) and Upper Canada (Ontario), and was primarily due to discontent with an unrepresentative political system. In Quebec however increasing French-English animosity was also a factor. The rebellion failed dismally in both provinces, but French Canadian nationalism in Quebec was stimulated. The *Rouge*-Guibord affair featured a group of militant and anti-clerical French Canadian nationalists (the *Rouges*) who became involved in a bitter dispute in the 1870s with church hierarchy over whether a deceased *Rouge* (Guibord) could be refused burial in a Catholic cemetery.[9]

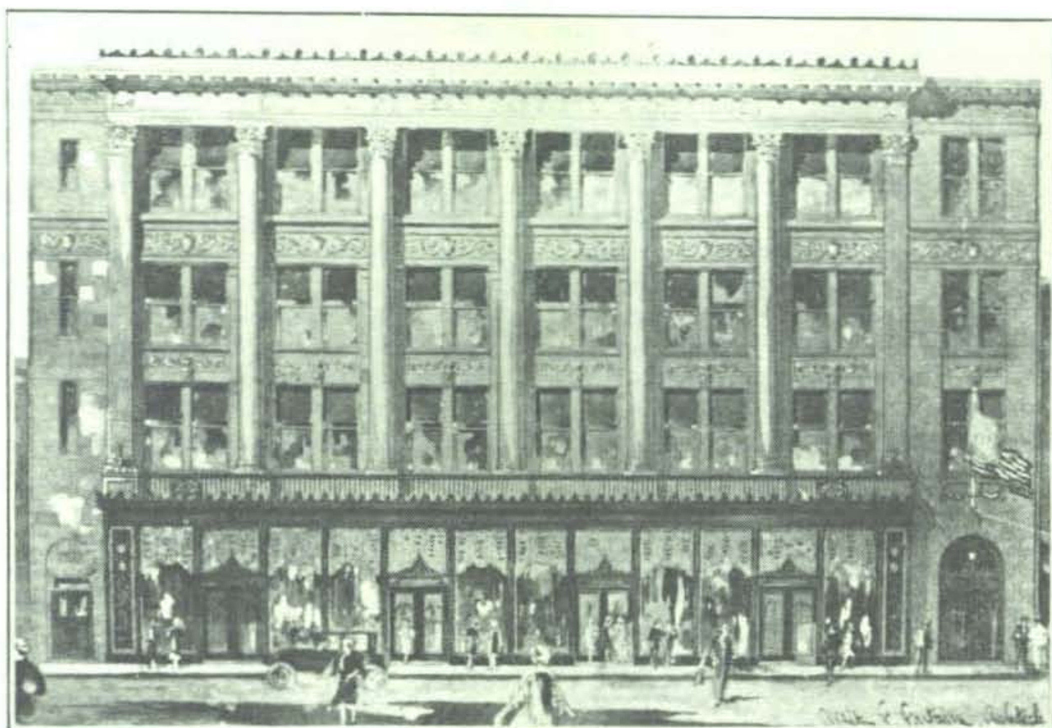
If merging Catholicism and nationalism could become troublesome in Quebec, amalgamation of *foi* and *langue* proved even more illusive and problematical in the United States. Many reli-

gious and lay leaders who immigrated to New England carried with them the idea of the providential mission. Catholicism however as French Canadians knew it was as altered in America as was *survivance*. Franco-Americans no longer controlled the hierarchy of the church as did their counterparts in Quebec, and the status of Catholicism itself was far different. Freedom of religion meant that the church could never enjoy legal and financial advantages which accompanied its semi-established position in Quebec. There, outside of Montreal, the only thing rarer than a non-French Canadian was a Protestant. But in the United States (even in New England) Catholics were in a distinct minority, and Franco-Americans were a minority within Catholicism. The administrative control of the church hierarchy was far tighter here than had been the case in Quebec, particularly over control of parish finances. Finally and most importantly there was the Irish "problem." In America the Irish had gained almost exclusive control of the church hierarchy, and were hesitant to give up any of this control to later-arriving Catholic immigrant groups. So Franco-Americans were not masters of their own religious house, as they had been in Quebec. To complicate the matter further, the Irish vision of religion and nationality was far different from that of French Canadians. Instead of fusing *foi*, *langue*, and *moeurs* (manners and customs), the Irish church hierarchy advocated maintenance of the first at the expense of the second and third. They felt that if Catholic immigrants became "Americanized" in terms of language and customs, Protestant America would be more likely to forgive them their religion.

Many Franco-Americans, particularly militants like the Sentinelles, focused upon the Irish hierarchy and its supposed assimilationist plot as the sole cause of their religious difficulties. This reveals one of the greatest weaknesses of Daignault and his supporters — their failure to recognize how all of the other differences between Catholicism in Quebec and in New England foredoomed any attempt to transplant the providential mission. Moderate Franco-Americans in Woonsocket like Eugène Jalbert and Élie Vézina, who refused to adopt the conspiratorial framework of Daignault, realized the need for adaptation to realities of the religious situation in their new land. Jalbert and Vézina were both officers of the Union St.-Jean-Baptiste, Franco-American national fraternal and mutual benefit society whose headquarters were in Woonsocket. The Union was the center of opposition to Sentinellism among moderate Franco-Americans.

Recognition of gaps in the religious vision of Sentinelles should not conceal the fact that they did raise some important questions concerning the nature and functioning of American Catholicism. Two of these dealt with ends, while one hinged on means. What was to be the role of national minorities within the church in the United States, and how was one to reconcile nationality and religion? Daignault and company felt that nationalities — specifically their own — should have a much larger role, including increased emphasis on mother tongue, national parishes, schools, priests, and bishops. Some went so far as implying that if nationality and religion conflicted, nationality should take precedence. The church hierarchy and moderate Franco-Americans who supported them agreed that nationalities had a place within American Catholicism, but ethnic concerns had to be subordinated to the common goal of all Catholics — preservation of religion. Moderate Franco-Americans insisted that this did not mean extermination of national parishes, and church leaders agreed. The years after the Sentinelle affair however have shown the correctness of Daignault's concern, for the importance of nationalities and their parishes has steadily decreased. Yet Daignault was probably right for the wrong reasons. This decrease has been primarily due to broader trends such as weakening of immigrant-ethnic ties, rather than the result of active policies on the part of the church. The war was lost even if Daignault had won his battle, since the end result would ultimately have been the same. Of course Franco-Americans were not the only Catholic immigrants to come into conflict with the Irish hierarchy. Italian, Polish and other Eastern European nationalities had similar experiences and disputes concerning the role of national minorities within American Catholicism.[10]

The second broad religious question asked by the Sentinelles was how much control could the diocese exert over individual parish affairs? They often contended that this was their main concern,



Guide Officiel des Franco-Americains, 1931

Headquarters of the Union St. -Jean-Baptiste, Social St., Woonsocket, R.I.

particularly when they were afraid of being labeled "un-American" for pushing the nationality issue too far. It is true that the obligatory nature of diocesan fund drives was one of Daignault's pet hates, but it is obvious that this was closely related to the nationality issue. Daignault opposed the drives primarily because they threatened the financial independence of the national parish and because the money raised was to be spent on diocesan schools and charitable institutions, in which Daignault feared *survivance* would be weakened. But the diocesan control issue was important on its own, especially in the United States where a long tradition of individualism, localism, states' rights, and fear of a centralizing government as tyrannical, might lead one to believe that Daignault had struck a sympathetic chord. However Sentinelles again were trying to oppose inevitable waves of both history and the future. The Catholic church had always been run on the principle of hierarchical centralization, with authority and discipline devolving from the top. The demands of the twentieth century could only increase such centralization especially since the diocese was superior to the parish, both in terms of a wider financial base from which to collect funds and as a larger unit within which rational planning and disbursement decisions could be made. It is ironic that in this instance Sentinelles were doubly doomed — placed in a dilemma in which they were damned both if they did or didn't. On the one hand they were defending traditional religious and national ideas (militant *survivance*) which were doomed in America from the start. On the other hand the American ideals for which they were supposedly fighting, such as autonomy and self-determination, stood in opposition to their traditional background of Catholicism. Such contradictory polarities between old and new undermined the Sentinelle cause.

The two religious issues above both deal with goals. It was possible to talk rationally about these, although the three groups involved (Sentinelles, moderates, hierarchy) seldom seemed capable of this. Yet the topic which generated the most heat, emotional outbursts, and vituperative

name-calling concerned not any final goal but the question of tactics. How should a conflict between church authority and a dissident group be resolved? How far could dissidents go in opposition to their religious superiors, and what methods of opposition should be used? In arguing over these questions the internecine character of the Sentinelle affair became most evident. Moderates like Jalbert might have partly agreed, at least in theory, with some of the substantive issues which Daignault was raising. What they could not tolerate were his tactics of stridence and militance, his creating public turmoil. If one had a disagreement with church policy, one should respectfully carry the complaint up the steps of the hierarchical ladder and abide by the final decision of the church. Sentinelles broke all these rules. When Bishop Hickey rejected their requests, they began public agitation and turned their requests into demands. When the Pope did likewise, they went beyond the representative of God on Earth and put the matter before civil courts (unsuccessfully), committing the final blasphemy of mixing God and Caesar.

Daignault may have felt there was ample precedent within the history of American Catholicism for his militant means, and that "extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice.... Moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue."[11] However he made the fatal error of forgetting both his constituency and court. This was basically a religious dispute within the confines of Catholicism. When Daignault flaunted the traditions and rules of these confines too greatly, he ran the risk of alienating both his Catholic peers and judges. Religious disobedience, like its civil counterpart, may occasionally prove influential in the long run, but in the short run the disobeyer must be prepared to lose the case and pay the price. Daignault et al. seemed to forget this.

The complexity of the lasagna-like folding of layers of experience increases, as one sees that nationality and religion are enmeshed with the problem of infighting among Franco-Americans, particularly concerning the question of militance versus moderation. Contrary to popular stereotypes, a nationality seldom forms a unified entity. Ethnic infighting among Franco-Americans, one of the most evident and perhaps most damaging characteristic of the Sentinelle affair, is an excellent example of this. Such divisive infighting did not begin in 1924 with the publication of *La Sentinelle*. Internecine struggles, and factional feuds and divisions were a tradition of French Canada from the days of New France, when the "independent" character of the habitant was first noticed. This intense individualism persisted after the English conquest, as distrust of *les Anglais* and retreat within the Quebec sanctuary did not spell complete solidarity within the group. French Canadians who immigrated to New England continued bickering among themselves, so much so that some of the elite thought this was hindering *survivance*.

During the Sentinelle affair such fratricidal infighting concerned nationality and religion, and ultimately revolved around the issue of militance versus moderation. Again this involved a dispute over means as well as ends. While Sentinelles assured their supporters that the ends justified the use of militant means, their Franco-American opponents questioned not only the tactics of militance, but also whether such means would bring about the desired goals, and whether the goals themselves were desirable. Sentinelle militants advocated fierce preservation of an isolationist *survivance*, to be achieved by rejecting all compromise, cooperation, and adaptation. Moderates counseled adaptation to a different environment, and cooperation with "outsiders" like the Irish church hierarchy, in order to maintain as much of the national heritage as was feasible.

This militant-moderate dispute also did not begin with Sentinellism. It can be considered the great French Canadian debate. Quebec nationalists have fought among themselves since the early nineteenth century over whether militance or moderation was the proper way to protect *survivance*, and over how much conciliation and compromising with English Canadians could be allowed in the pursuit of this goal. This debate was carried from Quebec to New England and was a source of dispute there, both among Franco-Americans and between them and the Irish, from the 1880s to the 1920s.

From this chronological point of view, the Sentinelle affair can be seen as the culmination of the militant-moderate debate among Franco-Americans.[12] The irony is that while both sides were acting upon assumptions which might be con-

sidered "right" or "correct" at the time of the affair, the outcome and aftermath of Sentinellism demonstrated that both militants and moderates were in the final analysis "wrong." The Sentinelles were "right" in their perception that Franco-Americans were slipping away from their national culture and religion. However moderate Franco-Americans were also "right" in declaring that militancy would be counter-productive and would bring reaction. But in the long run they were both "wrong" since French Canadian *survivance* could not be preserved outside of the Quebec homeland, regardless of whether militance or moderation were followed. Given the inevitability of failure, maybe it was the Sentinelles who hewed closer to the national line. Did they really care if they won or lost, or did they see themselves as the noble but ill-fated pursuers of a lost cause, thus continuing the French Canadian tradition of lionizing and mythologizing martyrs? Santayana has defined a fanatic as one who redoubles his efforts once he has forgotten his goal. If Sentinelles were guilty of fanaticism at times, was it that they lost sight of their goal, or that the fight itself was the hidden goal?

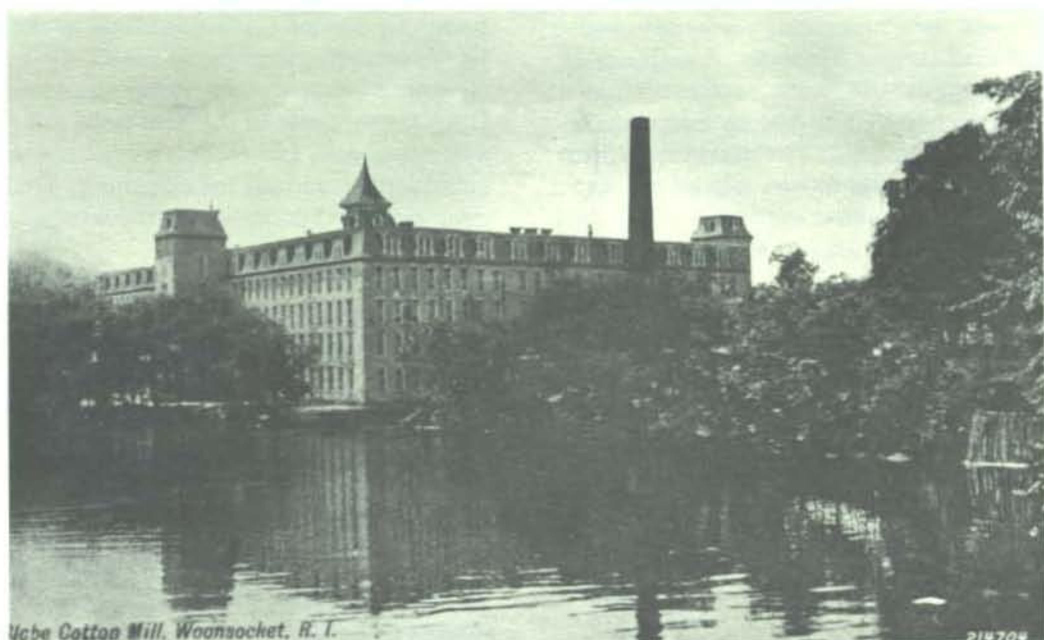
The final "contour of the landscape" illuminated by events of the Sentinelle affair involves the influence of the environment which provided the backdrop — the specific locale of Woonsocket and the general setting of American culture. The unique nature of Woonsocket must have conditioned the struggle. It is a small city (about 50,000 people), whose population, economic and social growth stopped in the 1920s. In examining the influence of Woonsocket, the image of an enclosed room or compartment comes to mind. This was a town where the mill, the immigrant, the Catholic, and the Franco-American dominated. Each of these affected the outlook of Franco-Americans living there, ultimately producing an insulating or "closeting" effect.

Textile mills gave Woonsocket its drab physical appearance and its working class environment, where a hard day's labor dominated all else. For workers who could afford to save little money, who had little chance of occupational mobility, and whose lives were oriented around mill and tenements, the electrical atmosphere of Sentinellism (with its charges and counter-charges, dramatic events, meetings, and rallies) must have been a welcome diversion from everyday drudgery. Since 1890 immigrants and their children had made up more than four-fifths of Woonsocket's population, making the city far more foreign than "Old American" in the 1920s. The same ratio applied to religion, with Roman Catholics being the dominant group. Given these figures, is it surprising that "natives," the Protestant Yankees, were little more than interested onlookers during the great battle of the 1920s?

Franco-Americans in Woonsocket could derive a certain security from knowing that the great majority of their fellow citizens were both immigrants (first or second generation) and Catholics. However many other cities in New England were in a similar situation. The uniqueness of Woonsocket came from the fact that Franco-Americans by themselves were in a majority. From 1895 until after 1930 the first and second generation representatives of one ethnic group were a numerical majority there, a situation which was seldom duplicated elsewhere in the United States. If all generations are counted (third and beyond), 70 percent (36,000) of Woonsocket's population was Franco-American by 1930. This made the city the "Quebec of New England," both in terms of percentage of population which was Franco-American and in total number of Franco-Americans. The ethnic group's political, economic, and social position was nowhere as secure as was their demographic situation. However their unqualified demographic domination, and concomitant insularity, must have made many feel quite secure within the confines of the city. Such feelings may have helped give Sentinelle leaders the inner confidence to attempt their rebellion, and also may partially explain why moderate and militant Franco-Americans fought so unreservedly with each other within the city. They had little reason to fear serious censure and reprisals from Woonsocket's non-Franco-American population, which had minority status.

But Woonsocket was not a microcosm of the world. Outside the boundaries of the city, Franco-Americans were in a minority in New England, in the American Catholic church, and in the United States. This incongruity, between dominance in Woonsocket and realization of a different world outside, may have stimulated tensions which Sentinelles felt, resulting in revolt.

The intensity of nativistic feelings directed to-



RIHS Library

Post card view of Globe Cotton Mill, one of many textile mills in Woonsocket where French-Canadians found employment.

wards immigrants to the United States, particularly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, has been discussed frequently by American historians. French Canadians suffered from Yankee and Protestant nativism in New England before 1900, but such sentiments declined from that time on. During the Sentinelle affair itself this classical variant of nativism looms insignificant when compared to the vast amount of Irish-Franco-American conflict within American Catholicism. Thus one can see the Sentinelle affair as an indication that the traditional Yankee-immigrant, Protestant-Catholic, and rural-urban dichotomies of nativism may have been overstressed, at the expense of intra-ethnic, intra-religious, and intra-urban disputes.

However in the years immediately preceding the beginning of Sentinellism, there was an outbreak of nativism which started as anti-German feelings during World War I and broadened to include "100 percent Americanism" directed at all immigrants during and after the war. In Rhode Island this was reflected in the Peck bill, which advocated close state supervision of parochial schools, and limitation of foreign language teaching in such schools. The Peck bill was passed by the state legislature in 1922. It was never enforced and was repealed in 1925, partially because of adamant complaints from Franco-American leaders in Rhode Island.[13] Yet such attitudes and actions put Franco-Americans on the defensive, even in ethnic strongholds like Woonsocket, and made them more strident in defense of their culture. Such strident defensiveness could easily become militantly aggressive, as was the case with Sentinelles.

The 100 percent Americanism movement was part of the great "red scare" which formed the prologue to the 1920s. Although it is incorrect to view this decade in isolation, either as an aberrationist interlude (the "roaring twenties") or as a time of revolutionary changes (overlooking the fact that many of the changes became noticeable in the 1920s), it does indisputably form a distinct time-period which shaped the consciousness of those participating actively or vicariously in the Sentinelle affair. The hoopla and sensationalism of the 1920s has often been overemphasized, but the years did contain much melodrama and emotionalism, such as spectacular jury trials, new

amusements and fads, and changing morals and manners reflected in new life styles. A majority of the American populace may not have participated extensively in such activities, but an increasingly influential middle class did. The mass media such as newspapers, radio, and movies played a large role in publicizing the above events.

The excitement and drama of the Sentinelle crisis, at times manufactured and at times real, but always magnified by extensive New England newspaper coverage, mark this affair as symptomatic of the 1920s. Leaders on both sides of the dispute were middle class, which was not new in American history, but the enormous interest which they generated among Franco-Americans and others both in Woonsocket and throughout New England (as measured by newspaper readership, attendance at rallies, banquets, and meetings) reflects the tenor of the 1920s. Daily work lives of Woonsocket residents might still have been drab and dull, but there were increasing opportunities for entertainment.

Yet any serious study of the 1920s reveals tension and conflict, as well as sensationalism and frivolity. Whether it involved nativism as in the red scare and the Sacco-Vanzetti trial, fundamentalism as in the Ku Klux Klan and the Scopes "monkey" trial, or generational and sex disputes over the new roles of youth and women, the 1920s were full of dissension. Such strife often resulted from a clash between old and new — a cultural lag which accelerated with the popularization of technological developments such as the automobile, radio, and movies. The Sentinelle affair featured such tension resulting from a cultural lag conflict between old and new. Franco-Americans caught in dispute, both militant and moderate, were disturbed and alarmed about the changing face of their nationality, as adaptation to life in America began to overshadow homeland roots. Such adaptation would have been particularly disturbing in the 1920s, as Franco-American youths experienced new technological and cultural changes.

Friction arising from conflict between old values and new realities was also evident in the Catholic church's role in Sentinellism. Franco-American militants were unable to grasp the fact that the church in America could never be the same as it was in Quebec, while the Irish church hierarchy seemed unable to adapt to the needs of its "new immigrant" parishioners. Disturbed by a changing United States which was altering their lives, participants in the Sentinelle affair (militant, moderate, and church hierarchy) too often substituted emotions for reasoning. Thus they prolonged and complicated the struggle rather than clarifying it.

In the final analysis there is no one "key" to understanding the Sentinelle affair, but many different vantage points from which to view its significance. This article has dealt with such larger significances of an event which is primarily local history. The rationale for such an attempt is well put by Boyer and Nissenbaum in their study of the social origins of Salem witchcraft trials:

"We have... exploited the focal events... as a stranger might make use of a lightning flash in the night: better to observe the contours of the landscape which it chances to illuminate... What we have been attempting... is to convey something of the deeper historical resonances of our story while still respecting its uniqueness."[14]

1 It is difficult to explain briefly a word so freighted with meaning in the French Canadian lexicon. *Survivance* refers to the belief of French Canadians that they had (and have) a divine mission to preserve their national "race" and religion against Anglo-Saxon inroads, by insuring the survival and transmission of their native language, faith, and customs.

Footnotes will be confined to explanatory material and citations for quotations. For complete documentation of points made here, refer to the author's unpublished Ph.D. dissertation "The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and Militant *Survivance*: The Franco-American Experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island" (State University of N.Y. at Buffalo, 1975). Major primary sources on which dissertation and article are based include French and English language newspapers in Woonsocket and throughout New England (especially *La Tribune* and *La Sentinelle*, Woonsocket organs of opposing sides in the dispute); archival collections of the Union St.-Jean-Baptiste (Franco-American national society) and Franco-American national parishes in Woonsocket; United States census reports; Rhode Island state and Woonsocket city public documents; personal interviews with Woonsocket residents of the 1920s; and two contemporary "histories" written by opposing participants in the affair — Elphege Daignault, *Le Vrai Mouvement Sentinelliste en Nouvelle Angleterre, 1923-1929* (Montreal, 1936), and J. Albert Foisy, *The Sentinellist Agitation in New England*, 1925-1928 (Providence, 1930). Most relevant secondary studies are Robert Rumilly, *Histoire des Franco-Americains* (Montreal, 1958) 364-459, and Helene Forget, "L'Agitation Sentinelliste au Rhode Island (1924-1929)" (M.A. thesis, Univ. de Montreal, 1953).

2 Sorrell, 198-202.

3 Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins* (New York, 1964) passim, especially 85-86, for a development of these theories.

4 Cameron Nish, ed., *The French Canadians, 1759-1766: Conquered? Half-Conquered? Liberated?* (Toronto, 1966).

5 Mason Wade, *The French Canadians, 1760-1967* (Toronto, 1968) 1: 1.

6 Gordon, 141.

7 Change of cultural patterns to those of the host society.

8 Large scale entrance, on a primary group level, into cliques, clubs, and institutions of the host society, including intermarriage. Gordon, 71.

9 Wade, ch. 4 and 347-359.

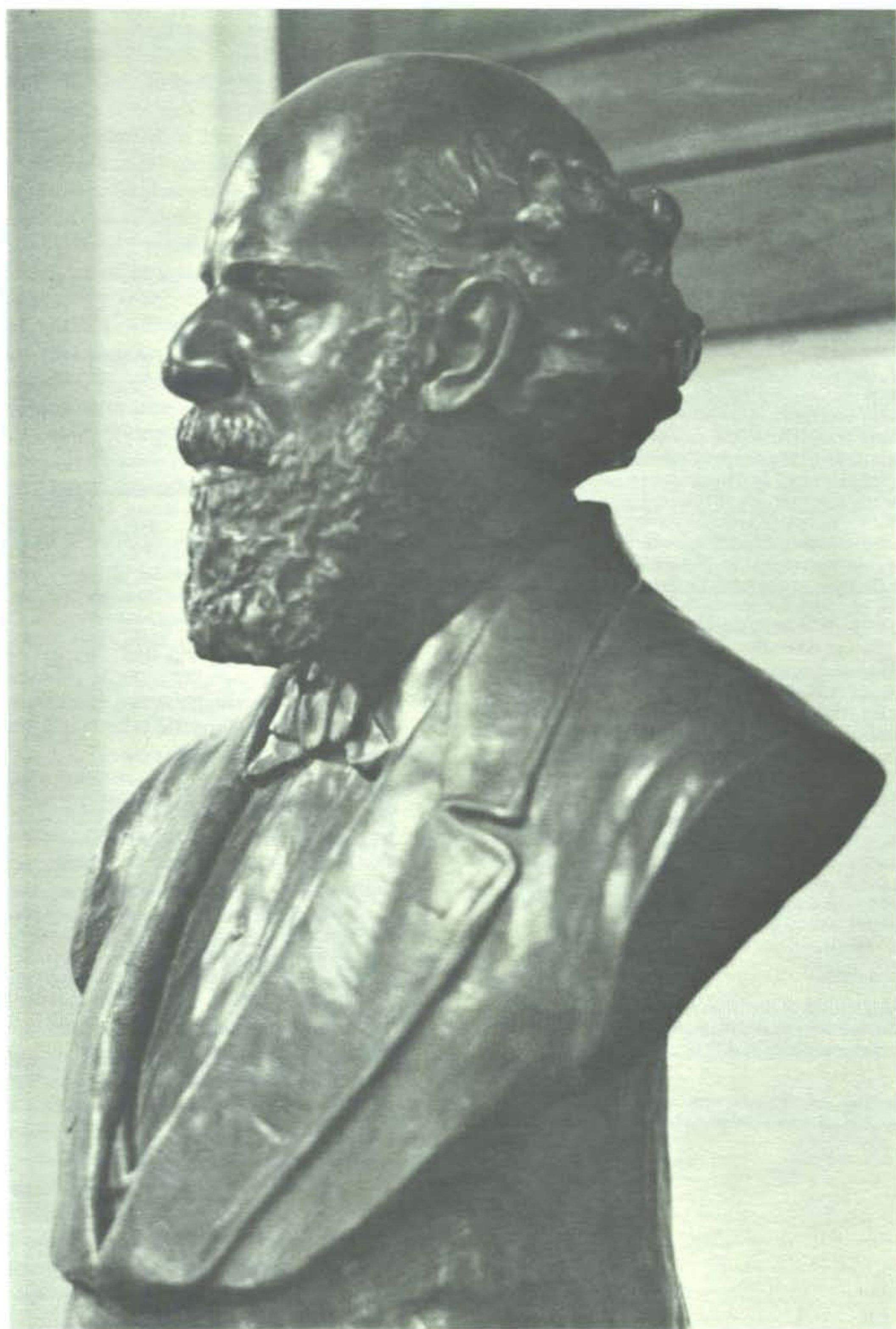
10 Peter W. Bardaglio, "Italian Immigrants and the Catholic Church in Providence, 1890-1930," *Rhode Island History* 34: 2 (May 1975) 47-57. Recent monographs include Jay Dolan's *The Immigrant Churches: New York's Irish and German Catholics, 1815-1865* (Baltimore, 1975), Silvano Tomasi's *Piety and Power: The Role of Italian Parishes in the New York Metropolitan Area, 1880-1930* (New York, 1975), Victor Greene's *For God and Country: The Rise of Polish and Lithuanian Ethnic Consciousness in America, 1860-1910* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1975), and Richard Linkh's *American Catholicism and European Immigrants (1900-1924)* (New York, 1975).

11 The quote is not Daignault's, of course, but Barry Goldwater's during his acceptance speech at the 1964 Republican national convention. Franklin L. Burdette, *The Republican Party: A Short History* (New York, 1972) 115.

12 But not among *Quebecois* where the dispute continued to rage and still does today, with the *separatiste* movement representing the militants, and moderate French Canadians advocating a host of less extreme solutions. Ramsay Cook, *Canada and the French Canadian Question* (Toronto, 1967).

13 Sorrell, 163-169; Rumilly, 335-350.

14 Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974) xii and 179.



Courtesy New England Conservatory of Music

Bust of Eben Tourjée, cast in 1895 by W.A.J. Claus.

Eben Tourjée's Rhode Island Roots

*by Edward J. FitzPatrick**

Well known as founder of the world famous New England Conservatory of Music in Boston (1867), Eben Tourjée and his earlier efforts at establishing music schools and conservatories in Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts are little known except to music historians. From the beginning a practicing music educator, Tourjée organized music classes at a young age; founded music schools, institutes, and a conservatory (before the New England); sang and played organ in several churches; and taught music in Fall River, Newport, East Greenwich and Providence.

These experiences prepared him well for his later lasting endeavor. Without these early successes and failures, it is doubtful that the embryonic years of the New England Conservatory would have weathered the arrival of another Boston music school in the late 1860s. Massachusetts and the musical world are forever indebted to this son of Rhode Island.

Born June 1, 1834 in Warwick, Eben was the second child and elder son of Ebenezer and Angelina Ball Tourjée. Of Huguenot lineage, the Tourjées probably originated from the family Targé which received two lots of a short-lived settlement in Frenchtown, East Greenwich, in 1686. The name also reads Tourgee in old deeds.[1]

Angelina Ball, born December 4, 1808, daughter of Edmund and Charity Dodge Ball, married Ebenezer Tourjée May 10, 1829. Their son Eben had three sisters: Charity, Mary and Anna, and one brother, Jeremiah.[2]

At the early age of eight years, Eben began working at a calico mill in East Greenwich a long day of fourteen hours with a short wage of a dollar a week. He next worked in a woolen mill in Phenix and by the age of thirteen was an employee of the Harrisville cotton mills owned by Governor Elisha Harris.

Eben was singing boy alto in the Methodist church choir and received instruction at the East Greenwich Academy, having been enrolled there by Governor Harris — a trustee of the institution — who apparently took a special interest in the ambitious and talented youngster. When the organist for the governor's daughter's marriage failed to arrive from Boston, Eben reputedly played the wedding march from memory and so became endeared to the governor.[3]

Elisha Harris financed singing lessons in Providence for Eben with Professor Lewis Thomas Downes, businessman and musician who taught the Bassini method of vocal culture. Playing organ at the Methodist church in East Greenwich and practicing piano at the academy, Eben each Saturday walked thirteen miles to Providence for vocal lessons with Downes and piano lessons with Richard Eastcott. At the academy he met Miss Abbie Tuell — later to be his wife — who was then attending a young ladies' finishing school in Providence.

About 1850 Eben moved into Providence to begin working for the Edward W. Billings music store and playing piano in the store orchestra. He boarded with three other young men: John Carpenter, a Brown University student, Charles Weatherbee, a newspaper apprentice, and David Allen, a dry goods clerk.

Taking lessons in voice (then a tenor), piano and organ, Tourjée was more interested in

*Professor FitzPatrick is chairman of the department of music at Boston State College.

teaching others the art of music than in his own concert career. He conceived teaching fundamentals of music and applied lessons in voice or instruments in small classes. The usual method of pursuing private lessons had been on a one-to-one relationship of pupil to instructor. He believed that music lessons could be taught in classes, as in other subject areas. Each of four students in a piano class for example would benefit by observing methods employed by the teacher, by an expanded repertoire, and by performing for each other. This system, known for applied music as the conservatory system, was employed in Europe at the time; its most widely known source was the Leipzig Conservatory founded by Mendelssohn in 1843.

Tourjée outlined his small-class system on charts and displayed them to Eastcott who, while receptive to the idea, predicted failure of the plan in practice. However, Oliver Ditson, founder of the famous Boston music publishing house, while visiting Billings, encouraged Eben to try out his novel idea.

After three years' apprenticeship under Billings, Tourjée left Providence sometime in 1853 for Fall River, Massachusetts, to live with his aunt and uncle, Lizzie and Isaac Camm. At age nineteen his first business-teaching venture was launched at 69 North Main Street, advertised in the *Fall River Monitor* November 5, 1853: "Tourjée's New Music and Fancy Goods Store" which carried "a splendid assortment of piano fortes . . . music, English, French and German Fancy Goods, Ladies Work Boxes and Reticules, card cases, beads, mirrors, combs, opera glasses . . . tea bells, sewing birds, perfumery. The proprietor solicits a share of public patronage, as he is very desirous of proving to the Ladies and Gentlemen of Fall River that truth needs no microscope to magnify plain facts."

Tourjée began employing the class system of musical instruction to a small group of children, among whom were his cousins Frank and Joseph Camm. He conducted vocal classes and played organ in several churches, among them Bank Street Methodist Church in Fall River and Newport's famous Trinity Church.

Tourjée organized and made arrangements for musical institutes or conventions, usually of a few days to a week's duration, featuring musical instruction and choral singing conducted by some of the great itinerant teachers who were continuing the singing school movement of the eighteenth century. Artemas N. Johnson, E.H. Fort, Benjamin F. Baker and other convention specialists depended upon Eben for a smoothly running organization when they came to Fall River and to other locations in the area. He booked the Boston-based Mendelssohn Quintette Club chamber music concerts in the town. Thomas Ryan, its leader, later would provide accompaniment for the New England Conservatory of Music's first commencement program in Boston, June 30, 1870.[4]

East Greenwich's *Weekly Pendulum* November 3, 1855 reported Eben Tourjée's marriage to Abbie J., daughter of Mr. John D. Tuell in Warren "on Wednesday October 31, 1855, in the Methodist Episcopal Church, by Rev. Brown, assisted by Rev. Mr. Talbot of Fall River . . . The American Brass Band of Providence was present of the above occasion, and performed among other choice and appropriate pieces, Mendelssohn's Grand Wedding March, with very fine effect."

Eben brought his parents and three sisters to Fall River where they worked in his store. The city's 1857 directory listed Ebenezer S. Tourjée as clerk at 69 North Main Street, the address of his son's music store.

Tourjée's success with children was gaining for him both a wide reputation and acceptance of his class method of teaching music. His extraordinary gifts of organization and promotion, his friendship and acquaintance with numerous musicians, music educators, music publishers and businessmen, and his tireless energy combined to keep his name before the public in musical matters.

The *Fall River News* January 31, 1856 published an advertisement foreshadowing much of Eben's efforts in music education for the next thirty-five years:

Grand Juvenile Concert and Second Representation of the Truly Splendid Floral Cantata The Flower Queen. Mr. Tourjée would respectfully announce that the above presentation of The Flower Queen by his classes will take place at the new Music Hall on the evening of February 14, 1856; on which occasion his Juvenile Classes will all appear, forming a full and effective chorus. The principal Solo parts will be sustained by the

best talent which could be selected from his Classes. In addition, will be performed Songs, Duetts, etc., with Choruses from the 'Carmina Melodia.'

Mr. T. begs leave to state that he has devoted the entire season to rehearsing and preparing for this Concert.

Tickets: 25 cts. may be obtained at Tourjée's.

From the pen of American composer George F. Root — associate of Artemas N. Johnson and Lowell Mason in Boston — *Flower Queen* was a significant choice at a time when European musical influence, largely through massive immigrations following the 1848 revolutions in Europe, overwhelmed native American composers and musicians.[5]

In spring 1856, Tourjée was teaching many of the children of Newport, but not as a salaried public school teacher, despite persistent claims. That autumn Lizzie was born, the first of four children.[6]

Tourjée edited and published a small music paper called *The Key-Note*, incorporated into a new periodical *Massachusetts Musical Journal* in 1855. Devoted to the cultivation of music as a popular branch of education, it served as a vehicle to report musical happenings such as the various music conventions and institutes of A.N. Johnson and B.F. Baker. The fifth issue of this little semimonthly was the last to carry Fall River as the masthead, for the next copy was published in Boston. By volume two, May 1, 1856, B.F. Baker was editor and proprietor, the paper's name changed to *The Boston Musical Journal*, and Tourjée was not mentioned thenceforth. The final issue, February 15, 1857, transferred all remaining subscriptions to *Dwight's Journal of Music*.[7] A typical article from "Journal of the Corresponding Editors" by A.N. Johnson and E.H. Frost appearing in each issue, reported: "August 28th (1854). Attended the Musical Convention at Newport, R.I., a four day session. This place is one of the 'fashionablest' fashionable watering places in the country, and at this time was as full of fools from uppertendom as it could be. The inhabitants get their living by sponging strangers. Sponged us out of some 50 dollars, in addition to all the receipts of the Convention."

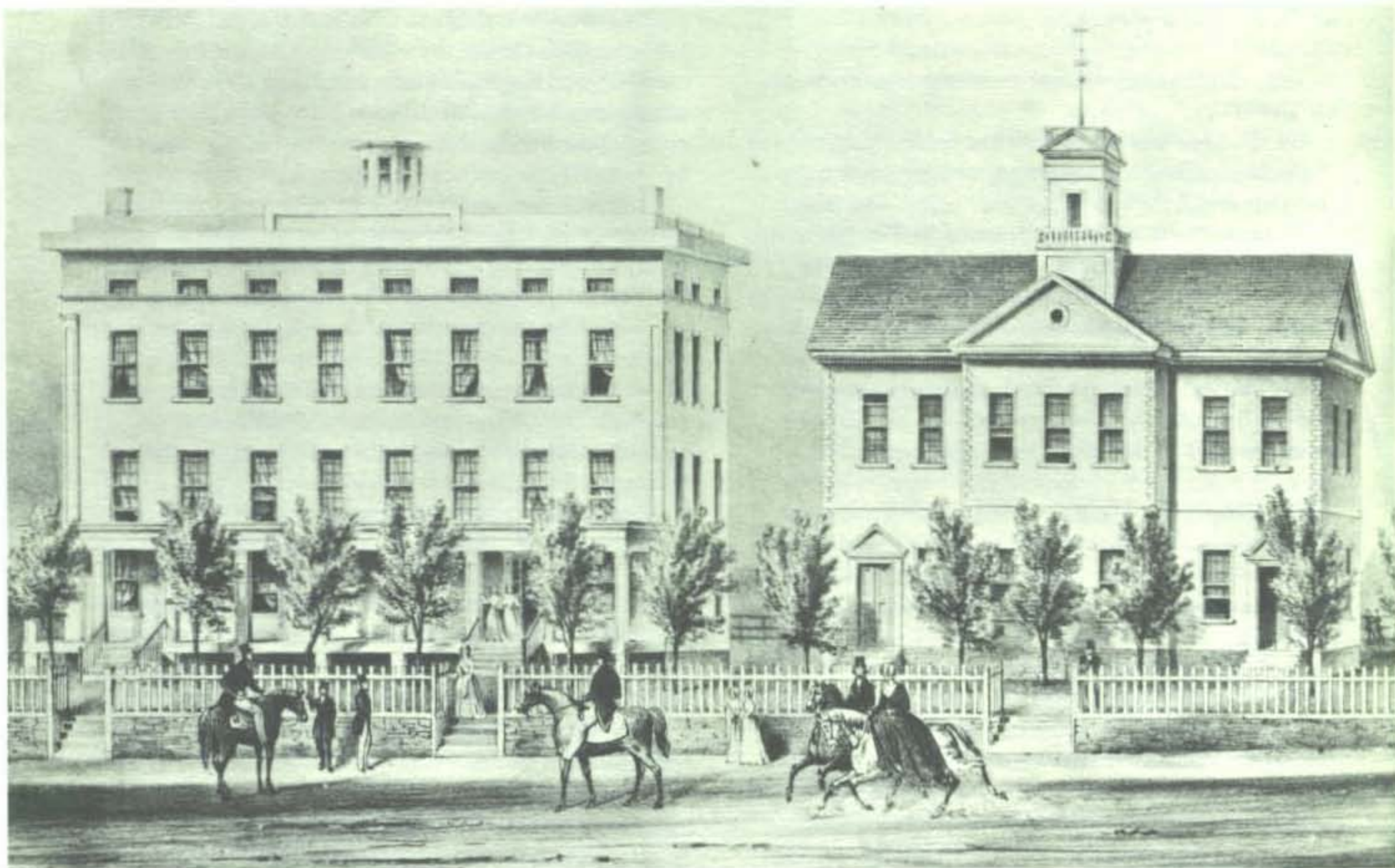
An accompanying column in the same issue reveals the rigorous itinerary of a professor of music; "Between August 16th and the following January 29th (1855) the editor participated in 40 conventions lasting from one to nine days in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, all travel by train."

Tourjée's sphere of activities required traveling between Fall River, Newport, and East Greenwich. His expanding musical efforts coupled with financial depression in 1857 caused the closing of his initial business venture. *Tourjee's Musical Emporium* which in 1855 sold "Splendid $500 Piano Fortes" gradually diminished in importance to *Tourjee's Cheap Carpet Store* a year later. It is probable that father Ebenezer Tourjée managed the Fall River establishment from summer 1856 until its demise. *The Fall River Monitor* May 2, 1857 advertised "an extra opportunity to purchase a Piano Forte if applied for within a few days at the music store of E. Tourjée." No further notices were carried in either of the Fall River journals. The city's 1855 and 1857 directories listed father and son as working in the music store at 69 North Main Street, but the next issue in 1859 shows no entries for Tourjées.

A second daughter Clara — supposedly named after Robert Schumann's wife — was born in 1858. In the fall of that year Tourjée addressed a convention in Providence where he stressed the necessity for inclusion of vocal music in the public school curriculum, for the ultimate purpose of improving congregational singing in churches.

At age twenty-five, Eben was invited to head a music department at Providence Conference Seminary, East Greenwich, by its principal, Rev. Dr. M.J. Talbot. He accepted and the musical institute was separately chartered. Eben wished to expand its offerings into a full music school, while it was apparent that the seminary board of trustees were contemplating a good service department of music, one that would serve the needs of the rest of the school. The famous "pig's tail challenge" was exchanged at one of these early trustee meetings.

The often reported historic incident happened this way. Tourjée offered a plan of organization for the seminary's musical institute to create a separate school, similar to European music schools or conservatories. The chairman coldly



RIHS Library

Providence Conference Seminary (no longer standing), East Greenwich, R.I., where Eben Tourjée established a musical institute in 1859. Lithograph published by J.H. Bufford, Boston, n.d.

remarked that "it would no more be possible to establish a conservatory in this country than it would be to make a whistle out of a pig's tail." Tourjée immediately snatched the unintended challenge with "Gentlemen, you will see that it is possible to do both." Eben secured the porcine coda, fashioned a whistle and performed at the next trustees' meeting. While the present location of this swinish item is unknown, for many years it was displayed in the instrument collection of the New England Conservatory and described by *Cosmopolitan* September 1889 with a double pun, as "a whistle evidently constructed from the tail of a pig. Its golden oleaginous coil meekly reposes among the most treasured of musical mementos: tied with a neat bow of blue ribbon, and a card labels it 'I could a tail unfold.'"

In the same year Tourjée was teaching music in Newport and directing it in Trinity Church. An alumna — J.N.F. initials an extant letter written in 1907 — reported: "I believe I will study music this summer [1859]. I sought out E. Tourjée, organist at Trinity Church. He came to my house and I took two terms that summer. He has a boy choir, the only one in Newport, and he was often invited to take his choir to Trinity Church in New York City. He taught his pupils to feel that music had a divine mission on earth, same as the gospel." She followed Tourjée to the East Greenwich seminary in 1861, but could not remain singing "war songs against the South, my home." She wrote of Tourjée's urging all his students "to

be broad, to know more than the keyboard, to read the lives of the masters and to learn the history of music." After the war, she continued her musical studies at the New England Conservatory.

While Tourjée was to achieve great success in other locations — East Greenwich, Providence, and Boston — surprisingly this record was not sustained in Newport, where the committee on music of Trinity Church, dissatisfied with Tourjée's primary attention to the musical institute of the seminary in East Greenwich, "were requested to devise some scheme for improving the music" and entered the following report on December 9, 1861: "The Committee are satisfied that with proper and sufficient instruction, a choir of boys can furnish such music as is needed in our service, and that with the present organist's other engagements, it is quite impossible to this end: Therefore, Resolved that Mr. Tourjée be notified that the Vestry wish to terminate their engagement with him as organist, on the last day of the present month." The next resolution appointed Henry S. Cutler, director of music at Trinity Church in New York City, to "superintendence" at Trinity in Newport with Tourjée's salary and with the added privilege of appointing his own "deputy director." This acknowledged that the position was too time-consuming for one man. Whether relevant or not, it must be remembered that Tourjée was a staunch Methodist for his entire life.[8]

Eben was now able to devote his major efforts to the institute in East Greenwich. He apparently generated much enthusiasm and interest in the musical offerings and performances at the religiously oriented college as evidenced by this criticism of a concert held in late August 1860:

"The Organ Concert at the Seminary Chapel on Tuesday past — organist Mr. Wilcox of Boston, Miss Reynolds and Miss Baker of Providence sung '2 or 3' pieces, and the closing piece was sung by Prof. Tourjée and his vocal class . . . (They) performed their part beautifully.

"Two points must have been made clear to every one present, that the organ is a superior instrument, and that Prof. Tourjée is an excellent instructor in the Science of Sounds."[9]

As various Southern states seceded during spring 1861 and the Union mustered for conflict, the seminary sponsored a concert for the benefit of the Kentish Guards, a company of 100 volunteers (established in 1774) in East Greenwich. *The Rhode Island Pendulum* reported that "At the close of the ceremonies, Lt. W.E. Peck proposed three cheers for Prof. Tourjée, three cheers for the Choir, three cheers for the author of the original song 'The Brave Kentish Guards' and three cheers for *the Constitution as it is*" (italics in original).[10]

The musical institute flourished to such an extent that its continuous expansion awakened professional jealousies in other branches of the seminary. It had never been the intention of the trustees that this Methodist-Episcopal religious academy should become a mere branch of the musical institute; thus differences in educational objectives and philosophies caused a rift between the two factions. *Dwight's Journal of Music* observed that the institute had a music class of fifty students, and that "as an aid in the department of theory, Mr. T. has collected a large variety of musical instruments." This accumulation was to become known as the director's cabinet.

Tourjée resolved the uncomfortable situation temporarily by sailing on the *Persia* for Europe on August 15, 1863, where he planned to investigate all phases of continental musical conservatories, including methods, textbooks, and especially curriculums.[11]

Probably the Honorable Nicholas Ball, Eben's uncle and senior by six years, helped to finance the European trip. Nicholas Ball, a seaman, had returned to Rhode Island from successful gold operations in California. He was elected a state senator and later constructed the famous Ocean View Hotel on Block Island.[12]

In Europe Eben conferred with Adolph B. Marx and Julius Stern at their conservatorium in Berlin which they had co-founded with Theodore Kullak in 1850. Tourjée met distinguished organist Carl August Haupt and he was greatly impressed with congregational singing in German churches, which was to benefit him later in his development of the Praise Service form of worship. He consulted Antoine Louis Clapisson in Paris, completing what he termed his "critical personal examination of the most celebrated Music Schools in Europe" before returning home to Rhode Island.[13]

Fired with grandiose plans for the institute in

East Greenwich, Eben soon realized that he must leave the Providence Conference Seminary and establish his own independent music school. His conception of a liberal and broad musical education with its ultimate expansion in institutional facilities and faculty was neither understood nor accepted by academy trustees. He moved his growing family — Homer was born in 1862, and Emma arrived in 1864 — to Providence, where he carefully undertook strategies soliciting support for his new school.

In a little document entitled "Proposition for Establishing a Musical College or Conservatory in Elmwood," December 1864, Tourjée referred to the rapid rise of musical taste in America, while he deplored lack of both teachers and thorough training. "What is needed" he explained, "to meet the demands of the present time, is a Music College or Conservatory on a broad and liberal basis, that would furnish every opportunity for a thorough and systematic mastery of the Science in all its parts and relations." He compared the availability of musical educational opportunities in Europe to those in the United States. Americans were as gifted as other peoples, Tourjée implied when he wrote: "It cannot be denied that we have talent enough to sustain a Conservatory here, but hitherto the attention of the people has been directed to other branches of education, while music has been to a great extent neglected." He referred to the recent agitation for founding a music school in New York City and emphasized the superiority of the conservatory method over private instruction. In the entire nation there did not exist any music college or conservatory equivalent to those in St. Petersburg, Berlin, Leipzig, Munich, Stuttgart, Cologne, Dresden, Prague, Vienna, Stockholm, Warsaw, Bucharest, Geneva, Liège, Brussels, Amsterdam, Madrid, Lisbon, Milan, Florence, London, and Paris, among others.

Even in the Western Hemisphere there were conservatories in Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, Santiago, Buenos Aires and many smaller cities before Tourjée's prototype in Providence. It should also be recalled that Peabody Academy of Music, financed by Yankee philanthropist George Peabody in his founding letter of 1857, did not open in Baltimore until 1868. Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio did not open until September 5, 1865.

Tourjée, in December 1864, petitioned the General Assembly to incorporate an association with a capital of $100,000 — initial and only cost, he promised — to purchase land in Elmwood and to erect and furnish buildings suitable for a college of music. Rhode Island would be the first to establish this unique institution in the United States. Eben appealed "shall such a Conservatory, one that will be an honor to our country and to the State in which it may be located, and one that shall combine all the advantages of the best Conservatories in Europe, be established?" He drew attention to his successful enterprise at East Greenwich and how "we have outgrown our accomodations." He enumerated the propitious dividends "resulting from the erection of a suitable building located so near the city of Providence as Elmwood, in itself a most desirable location, being one of the most pleasant suburbs of the city, with a choice population and at the terminus of a Horse Rail Road to be laid in the Spring which will bring it within a few minutes ride of the city, thus affording the students opportunities of hearing concerts and performances of the best Musicians and advancing their education in the Art of Music beyond what would be gained within the Institution itself."

Tourjée told of plans to utilize summer vacation time by conducting institutes with a profit "aggregate of $9000" for 200 students in attendance. He outlined his needs: a building or buildings for 300 students, and rooms for 100 piano fortes; a chapel large enough to seat 600, with a first class organ "to furnish students every facility for studying this instrument, and also to accompany religious services held every morning and evening."

Eben the entrepreneur listed his qualifications again and to alleviate apprehensions concerning success of the large enterprise, he wrote "We answer as follows, viz: a varied experience embracing a term of fifteen years . . . extensive acquaintance with the leading musical men of our country . . . a Tour in Europe embracing an investigation into all their principal Conservatories and Music Schools." He mentioned again the growth of the musical institute in East Greenwich, and he guaranteed financial self-supporting power — after the initial $100,000 — from tuition receipts.

He analyzed fees in other colleges and found that they were self-sustaining, and many paid a good dividend. His music school should do as well at least, for its tuition would range from seventeen to thirty dollars per term. America was behind Europe, for there "the schools are full. The Conservatory of Paris alone had 851 students enrolled in its last annual catalogue. We are already overrun with students and have constant applications."

Tourjée enlarged to double size his four-page "Proposition" with testimonials from famous individuals who recommended support of the bold venture. Among the numerous persons testifying to Eben's professional and administrative abilities were the following — Alexander W. Thayer, writing from Vienna while working upon his definitive biography of Beethoven — Oliver Ditson, music publisher and Tourjee's supporter for many years — Dr. John Kingsbury, Dr. B. Sears, Dr. F. Wayland, and Prof. J.L. Lincoln, all of Brown University — Bishop Thomas Clark of the Rhode Island Episcopal Diocese — and Rev. S.L. Caldwell of the First Baptist Church.

Eben mentioned an offer by Rev. B.W. Gorham, an editor and trustee of Susquehanna Seminary, Binghamton, New York, which would have transferred the musical institute from East Greenwich to Binghamton on a ten-year lease without charge under Tourjee's directorship. Partly because of his European trip and certainly because of his loyalty both to the academy at East Greenwich where he had first studied music and to Rhode Island, Eben refused the enticing tender.

Despite his carefully planned presentation, accompanying support from many important individuals including his uncle Senator Nicholas Ball, and his promise that the conservatory would pay for itself after initial costs, Tourjée was given little encouragement by the General Assembly beyond a charter. Undoubtedly a war-time state government could not support such a cultural undertaking financially, but Eben's spirit and drive would not be contained.

One month later Tourjée founded his own musical institute on February 2, 1865 at 56 Weybosset Street in Providence, for the purpose of giving instruction in all departments of music. Repeating many of the features of the previous school in East Greenwich, the new institute offered a graduating course in social, instrumental and theoretical music and awarded diplomas to those completing the course.[14]

Eben transferred more than the school's name to the capital. Along with Abbie and his four children, he brought L. Franklin Snow, his assistant, and Snow's wife Sarah; a following of some music "majors" from the academy; and his private collection of musical instruments. The Tourjées, Snows, and Herman Decker, art instructor, were all living at 15 College Street at the time of Rhode Island's 1865 census.

The new institute provided superior teachers "for those who desire to pursue a Scientific and Literary Course in connection with Musical Culture or Painting and Drawing alone." Eben was thinking of dormitory students with homes some distance from Providence when — to allay any parental fears about life in the big city — he advertised "the best accomodations are furnished to students from abroad, who will be under the constant supervision of the teachers."

Tourjée's philosophy of educating well-rounded musicians is reflected in his faculty roster:

Eben Tourjée — director, organ, piano, vocal culture, theory of music.

L. Franklin Snow — piano, organ, harmony, musical composition.

August Heise — violin, flute, clarionet, all other band and orchestral instruments.

George F. Newland — guitar.

Herman Decker — drawing, painting.

James W. Colwell — Latin, English.

Charles M. Rogers — English, French, calisthenics.

Miss P.W. Cooke — piano, singing.

Mrs. Laura B. Millard — matron.

"What we need in America and in the world" — continued its director — "musicians educated to comprehend all the elements that live in music; the spiritual as well as the aesthetic. When this is accomplished, the art will become the handmaid of the Church in christianizing the world." Unique variations on the European conservatory theme were planned. Every pupil was required to practice not less than two nor more than six hours "in three-quarter sessions, so that fatigue does not ensue." Weekly soirees were held at which performing students gained valuable audi-

ence experiences. If a semi-monthly paper to which students were expected to contribute did materialize, no copies have been discovered. A type of placement service began "to secure professional positions in music for the graduates."

By November 20, 1865, the school became Tourjée Musical Institute and its address changed to the building where Eben and the others lived, the old Franklin House at 15 College Street known as Franklin Hall, soon called Music Institute Hall. The musical institute was such a success that piano-forte lesson fees decreased from eighteen to twelve dollars per quarter term. Pupil recitals were given on March 14, April 18, and for December 27, 1886 "Messiah," Tourjée conducted the largest mixed chorus ever assembled in Rhode Island. *The Boston Musical Times* "learned that over 200 persons have received instructions at the Institute, many of whom have been provided with situations at prominent institutions."[15]

The second issue of the institute's little catalogue announced four succeeding terms through July 1866, and reiterated the combination of thorough musical instruction as in European conservatories along with the requirement that every student must study voice and an instrument. Cultivation of the voice was greatly stressed.[16]

Tourjée's conception of liberal and broad education is again evident in statements such as "We believe that a thorough knowledge of the English branches is indispensable to a finished musical education; hence we attempt to combine the literary with the musical." He acknowledged that an essential to the development of mental powers was coupled with a corresponding physical development. Again showing concern for development of spiritual values in his young charges he wrote that "at the same time we endeavor to throw around our students such moral and religious influences as shall best aid them in the formation of correct habits."

An explanation of the course of instruction in music told of division into three grades. At the end of each grade, pupils were examined and rated by a faculty committee who decided upon advancement to the next grade. A certificate was awarded to pupils who partially completed the course, but a diploma was reserved for those who fully completed presumably all three grades. Voice students were admitted free of additional charge to classes in notation, vocalization, and solfeggio, and every student was invited gratis to chorus practice, theory, and general music instruction.

Many correlative advantages to students were strongly encouraged by the administration — access to several first class organs in Providence as well as to instruments in the institute building — normal classes which stressed methodology each term for those who intended to teach music — a visiting lecturer series enhanced by the announcement that "Sig. Carlo Bassini" would address students and faculty. Expertise gained through Tourjée's earlier Fall River music store experience was put to use, for the institute sold instruments, music, and musical merchandise "carefully selected and forwarded at the lowest cash prices."[17]

On the faculty for 1865-66 few changes occurred — Miss P.W. Cooke became preceptress, replacing Mrs. Millard (matron) — Miss Mary E. Wood teacher of English in lieu of Charles M. Rogers — and versatile Herman Decker added piano after his name in addition to drawing and painting.

Analysis of tuition fees and related expenses for the eleven-week term showed the following: board was thirty-three dollars, but washing, meaning laundry and rent of the furnished room was only four dollars per term. Lighting cost two dollars for the summer session and three dollars for each of the other three terms. In applied music fees, two lessons per week were available for fifteen

The Providence Directory for the Year 1866

MUSICAL INSTITUTE,
PROVIDENCE, R. I.
Affords rare facilities for obtaining a thorough
MUSICAL EDUCATION.
It is furnished with an able corps of twelve Teachers, a First Class Organ, Pedalier, Library and Musical Cabinet.
The School is graded; a full Graduating Course in Vocal, Instrumental, and Theoretical Music is established; a Certificate of Ability, Acquirements, &c., is furnished at the termination of the first and second grades, and a Diploma is awarded to those who complete the Course. At the close of each Term, a Testimonial of diligence, progress and deportment is given to every pupil.
Situations procured for those who desire to teach.
☞ For Catalogues, Circulars, or futher information, apply to
EBEN TOURJEE, *Director*.
No. 15 College Street, Providence, R. I.

dollars and three were twenty-two dollars. Pupils could rent a piano for one hour per day for the entire eleven weeks for one dollar. Common English cost five dollars but higher English increased to five dollars and fifty cents. Drawing and painting at ten dollars was the most expensive subject in the academic areas.

As in his earlier "Proposition," Tourjée in his second catalogue enumerated eighteen prominent men or business establishments as references. But unlike the earlier petition shelved in committee by the Assembly, no accompanying statements from each of the individuals listed appear. Among the new entries were — Major General Ambrose E. Burnside, governor from 1866 through 1869 — Professor John Knowles Paine of Boston, who held the first chair of music at Harvard University — Rev. O.E. Haven, president of the University of Michigan — and John Sullivan Dwight, editor of his own well known music journal. Dwight's name as a supporter is interesting for he was consistently cool to Tourjée's efforts, including the later founding of the New England Conservatory. Piano manufacturers were represented by Chickering and Sons; Hallet, Davis and Co.; Steinway and Sons; while the organ firm of E. and G.G. Hook was shown.

For the piano department, Tourjée secured a musician of rare talents, Robert Goldbeck, an excellent German pianist who first came to New York City in 1857 and who composed a little known opera entitled *Newport*. Further additions to the staff were George W. Haselwood, teaching vocal culture, and Joseph Harrison, teaching piano.

Goldbeck, thoroughly schooled by his uncle Louis Köhler in German, quickly rose in importance to Tourjée. In autumn 1866 the director, Snow, and Goldbeck met with a committee of interested citizens in Boston for the purpose of founding a conservatory of music in the Hub. Most of the members were impressed with Tourjée's administrative record, with his drive and enthusiasm, and with his convincing arguments on the need for such a professional school. Among affirmative backers were Dr. J. Baxter Upham, physician and patron of the arts later to serve as advisor to Tourjée's board of trustees in Boston; Carl Zerrahan, famous conductor of Boston's Philharmonic Orchestra, of the Harvard Musical

RIHS Library

Franklin House (right), home of Tourjée Musical Institute in 1865. This 1828 engraving is an early example of an advertising card. P. Hodges & Son were keepers of the hotel.

Association, and of the Handel and Haydn Society, later to become a Tourjée faculty member; Charles C. Perkins, past president, director and historian of the Handel and Haydn Society; and Oliver Ditson, founder of the music publishing house bearing his name and dependable friend of Tourjée's.

Encouraged enough to begin immediate plans for his most ambitious, most important and most lasting undertaking, Tourjée now changed his strategy. Unlike his previous moves from Fall River to Newport, then to East Greenwich, where each time he closed the previous establishment completely, he would operate both conservatories simultaneously. While his reasons may have been protective, he was well conditioned to the difficulties of opening a music school in the social and economic milieu of a large city.

In February 1867, the musical institute became the Providence Conservatory of Music and concurrently, on February 18, 1867, Tourjée's New England Conservatory of Music opened in seven rooms of the Music Hall in Boston to a large number of students. Listed with Tourjée, Robert Goldbeck also carried the title of director, but

Goldbeck remained in Boston for only one year before opening his own conservatory at Chicago in 1868.[18]

Although Tourjée had wanted to name his new institute after Boston, he discovered that Julius Eichberg, a widely known violinist, composer and conductor was planning to open at the same time a school to be known as the Boston Conservatory of Music. Tourjée then chose New England Conservatory of Music with which name both he and his school were to gain permanent worldwide renown. In its first year 1,414 pupils were enrolled, and this astounding figure was surpassed in the second season with 1,824 of whom one quarter were male students.[19]

Tourjée conceived projects in large terms. Along with Patrick S. Gilmore and Carl Zerrahan, he mounted the awesome spectacles of the famous peace jubilees of 1868 and 1872, monster conventions requiring choruses of 10,000 voices, an orchestra of 520 pieces, a military band of 486 instruments, reinforced by a great organ and by Boston firemen pounding out the rhythm of Verdi's anvil chorus on fifty anvils. Performing before 40,000 people were waltz king Johann Strauss and Franz Abt conducting their own works.

In 1869 Tourjée called a national music congress in Boston — the first organized meeting of music teachers on a national scale whose stated purpose was uniformity in developing music in America. Through succeeding national conventions the association achieved some success in fostering music in public education, but its most important result was the beginning of the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) in 1876, meeting in Delaware, Ohio, where Tourjee was elected its first president.

Tourjée promoted liberal education as a goal for his students with accelerating intensity, effecting a unique and complete academic affiliation with the new Boston University in 1872. Its college of music was in reality the graduate division of the New England Conservatory. Under this relationship, in which Tourjée served as dean of that college, the first bachelor of music degrees were awarded to New England Conservatory graduates who completed the further *gradus ad Parnassum* at the university.

Eben had benefited greatly from his 1863 European trip. Beginning in 1878, he organized musical tours of Europe on which he personally conducted 350 students aboard chartered steamships. For the next ten years these excursions featured New England Conservatory faculty members lecturing and conducting musical performances.[20]

Although Tourjée had left East Greenwich's academy in 1864 to found his own musical institute in Providence, he had not severed his connection completely. In summer 1874 he organized at East Greenwich the New England Normal Institute, a summer location for conservatory students and others primarily interested in pedagogy and teaching methods of music in public schools. Concerts staged at the close of these institutes included all student participants. The high calibre of both artists and repertoire has been reported —

"The performance of the grand oratorio of 'Elijah' by Mendelssohn . . . under the management of Dr. Tourjée and the singing under the accomplished baton of Mr. Carl Zerrahan. The chorus was by the members of the Institute assisted by a delegation from the Handel and Haydn Society from Boston . . . admirably supported by the Germania orchestra. Among the accomplished musicians . . . Mr. Thomas Ryan of the Mendelssohn Quintette Club. The solos were given by Miss Lillian B. Norton . . . portion of Parker's magnificent 'Redemption Hymn' was given." Lillian B. Norton became one of the most famous prima donna alumnae of the conservatory under her stage name *Nordica*.[21]

Tourjée's busy life centered in Boston after the death of his first wife Abbie in October 1867, for he closed the Providence Conservatory in 1868 and brought his family to Boston. L. Franklin Snow and some of the other institute personnel were also transferred to the New England Conservatory. Tourjée retained Sarah Lee as governess for the children. She became the second Mrs. Eben Tourjée in 1871, giving birth to Hattie (1872-74) and to Arthur (1875-1900). All lie buried with Eben Tourjée in the Newton (Massachusetts) Cemetery. Also buried near her father is Clara Tourjée Nelson (1858-1915) and her husband, dentist Dr. Everett Nelson. L. Franklin Snow died in 1876.

Tourjée's active life included direction of the children's Sunday School in the Methodist church

in Auburndale, Massachusetts for twelve years; organization of North End Mission in Boston; YMCA and Boston Missionary Society president. Connecticut's Wesleyan University awarded him an honorary doctor of music degree in 1869.

When Eben Tourjée died on April 12, 1891, he was not comfortable financially. While he had been a successful businessman, a genius at promotion and publicity, and a deeply religious Methodist, these qualitites combined in a most altruistic expression of his Christian charity. Tourjée had lived a full life completely devoted to making the art of music available to countless thousands and endless generations of fellow humans through his conservatories.

On May 11, 1883, Tourjée wrote his "Declaration and Deed of Trust" which transferred in perpetuity all his right, title, and interest in the New England Conservatory to a board of fifty trustees "who are forever to maintain the institution as a Christian school of learning." All of the stock was surrendered and the corporation reorganized as a non-profit institution the same as Harvard and Wellesley.[22]

Tourjée's first commencement address in June 1870 contained timeless advice which expressed his philosophy of music education to young conservatory graduates — "Be loyal to your art. In your hands may it ever be a reformer, an educator, a symbol of all that is beautiful, noble and good. In this world the study of music can never be completed, for of all the arts, it alone is to be perpetuated and perfected in eternity. Let your aims be lofty and your lives a perpetual rebuke to this superficial age."

1 Diagram of original plat in Martha R. McPartland, *History of East Greenwich 1677-1960* (East Greenwich Free Library Assn., 1960) 35, 38.

2 Nicholas Ball, *Edward Ball and Some of His Descendants* (Newport, R.I.: Mercury Printers, 1891) 12. In Rhode Island censuses of 1850 and 1865 the name is spelled: Tourgée, Targée, Taurgée, Taugée and Turgée. DAR records show: Tourger, Tourji, Tourjie, and Tourjer.

3 East Greenwich's academy — founded in 1802 as Kent Academy — experienced further name changes: 1841, Providence Conference Seminary; 1863, Providence Conference Seminary and Musical Institute; 1873, Greenwich Academy; 1884, East Greenwich Academy. Purchased by the town in 1942, the school closed shortly thereafter. Leo Eben Tourjée, "For God and Music," unpublished MS. n.d. (c. 1959-60), its author the son of Jeremiah, Eben's brother. *Weekly Pendulum* (East Greenwich and Wickford, R.I.) June 24, 1854.

4 *Fall River Monitor* June 10, 1854. *Weekly Pendulum* September 30, 1854.

5 Root also wrote songs under the pen name G. Friedrich Wurzel ("root") for the original Christy Minstrels.

6 *Newport City Documents 1853-1859*, "Report of the Public Schools" makes no mention of music being taught and lists no music teachers.

7 *Massachusetts Musical Journal* May 1, August 1 and 15, 1855.

8 George Champlin Mason, *Annals of Trinity Church 1821-1892*, 2nd ser. (Newport, 1894) 238-39.

9 *Rhode Island Pendulum* September 1, 1860.

10 Saturday, May 18, 1861.

11 *Dwight's Journal of Music*, August 22, 1863, p. 87.

12 Nicholas Ball, *Voyages of Nicholas Ball from 1838 to 1853* (Boston, 1895).

13 Henry M. Dunham, *Life of a Musician* (New York: Richmond, 1931) 40. W.S.B. Mathews, *A Hundred Years of Music in America* (Chicago: G.L. Howe, 1889) 462.

14 *Calendar and Circular of the Musical Institute, Providence, Rhode Island, for Spring and Summer Terms, 1865* (Providence, 1865).

15 Herbert Chandler Thrasher, "250 Years of Music in Providence, R.I., 1636-1886," unpublished typescript, Providence Public Library, 1937, 164-65. *Boston Musical Times* November 3, 1867.

16 *Calendar 1865-66* (second catalogue) 4pp.

17 *Calendar and Circular 1865* (first catalogue) p. 18.

18 *Daily Evening Traveller* (Boston) Tuesday, February 19, 1867.

19 Providence had been the location for an earlier short-lived New England Conservatory founded late in 1835 by Edward Richard Hansen and William Isenbeck which lasted but one season. Thrasher, 40-43, 54, 173. *Providence Journal* October 31, 1835. Joyce Ellen Mangler, *Rhode Island Music and Musicians, 1733-1850* (Detroit: Information Service, Inc., 1965) passim. *Annual Calendar and Circular of the New England Conservatory of Music*, 1868, 1869 (Boston: Edward L. Balch).

20 Luther L. Holden, *Summer Jaunt Through the Old World by the Tourjée Educational Party of 1878 and 1879* (Boston, 1879). Tourjée, *Program of 3rd Educational Tour to Cities and Sights of Europe* (Boston, 1880).

21 Daniel H. Greene, *History of East Greenwich, Rhode Island, 1677-1877* (Providence, 1877) 261-262.

22 *Manual of New England Conservatory, 1886-1887* (Boston, 1886) 12-22, also contains extracts from the first four annual reports of the director.

WHIG TICKET.

DEMOCRATIC TICKET.

CONSTITUTIONAL UNION
TICKET.

AMERICAN REPUBLICAN
Ticket.

REPUBLICAN TICKET.

Political Loyalty in Rhode Island — A Computer Study of the 1850s

*by Mario R. DiNunzio and Jan T. Galkowski**

Students of northern state politics before the Civil War have been treated in recent years to a number of excellent studies of party formation and allegiance. Mark L. Berger, Ronald P. Formisano, and Michael F. Holt raise challenging questions about the relative importance of the slavery issue as compared to the impact of nativism, the temperance movement, and local issues on disruption of political allegiance in the 1850s. They have skillfully employed traditional documentary evidence and careful analysis of demographic data and voting patterns to illuminate the complex process of party disruption and reformation. Such studies attempt to describe the behavior of party leaders and of rank and file voters, but none measure shifting allegiance among that active cadre of party faithful who operate the machinery of political organizations — that middle range of leadership which is more obscure than the elite and less "countable" than the electorate.[1]

This study illustrates use of the computer in analysis of loyalty among political activists in periods of party disruption. The technique was applied to political leadership of Rhode Island during the decade before the Civil War. For puposes of this investigation, leadership is defined to include members of the state legislature, delegates to state party conventions, members of the state's congressional delegation, and general officers of state government. This data base offers a number of advantages. It requires compilation of a relatively accessible and limited number of persons who could reasonably be deemed to constitute working organizations of the various parties. It should prove helpful in comparing party shifts and loyalty among political operatives in different states, for unlike election returns whose numbers vary enormously from small state to large, numbers in studies like this one should vary only as size of legislatures and conventions vary, i.e.within a small range.

The sample compiled for this study included 1,544 persons whose names appeared on party membership lists 3,045 times from 1852 to 1861. Their names and party affiliations were organized to delineate migration from one party to another during that decade of political turmoil. Prior to the advent of automated procedures for performing this reorganization, such a study would have been prohibitively long. Results show Rhode Island exhibiting some characteristics in common with the experience of northern states generally. But the study also reveals tendencies markedly different from the expected pattern.[2]

By 1851 bitterness over the Dorr rebellion for constitutional and franchise reform had receded but not disappeared. Law and Order forces, as the anti-Dorr men were labeled, had dominated state government through the 1840s, but by 1851 the Democratic party returned to power. Committed to moderate reform, Democrats swept the state from 1851 through 1853 by comfortable majorities. Modest franchise and labor reform, including a ten-hour law, accompanied Democratic success. Although the party's prospects seemed secure to some, by 1853 a Whig-dominated temperance movement and, more important, a surging nativism threatened to undermine Democratic strength. With passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, the slavery issue charged full force

*Professor of History, Providence College. Mr. DiNunzio teaches nineteenth-century American history. Mr. Galkowski is associate engineer, Communication Systems Software, IBM Corporation, Oswego, N.Y.

into politics of nation and state. Pressures of nativism and slavery proved to be most dangerous to party stability. By 1856 the Whig party had all but disappeared in Rhode Island as elsewhere, and Democrats were eclipsed by a combination of antislavery and nativist forces which built separate organizations but nominated almost identical state tickets.

Rhode Island's Republican party organized to fight extension of slavery into the territories. Working with Republicans and sharing personnel, the American-Republican (Know-Nothing) party combined an antislavery platform with an insistent nativism which attracted broad support in a small state experiencing a rapid increase in Irish immigration. This new combination dominated Rhode Island elections until 1860 when "conservative" elements bolted, fearful of the election of "radical" Seth Padelford as governor. These conservatives joined Democrats in supporting the election of William Sprague in a heated and eccentric campaign. From 1854 to 1861 Rhode Island political struggles pitted ineffective Democrats against an uneasy coalition of nativist and antislavery groups which never succeeded in fusing a unified Republican party.[3]

Computer analysis of the active cadre of Rhode Island politicians in the 1850s confirms the fluidity of the state's party structure during the prewar crisis. The Whig organization disappeared, but Whigs did not. Of 240 instances of Whig party membership, sixty-six names later appeared on Republican rosters and forty-four on American-Republican rolls. Thirty-six individuals concurrently affiliated with both parties. Only eighteen Whigs later became Democrats. See Migration Tableau. Thus, what Whigs did in Rhode Island closely follows Whig experience in other northern states: once undercut, they shifted heavily toward nativist and antislavery parties.[4]

MIGRATION TABLEAU

	WHIG	DEM	REP	A-R	CON*
WHIG	240	18	66	44	18
DEM	4	648	14	18	15
REP	0	4	423	23	9
A-R	0	10	79	390	24
CON	0	0	0	0	165

*Constitutional Unionists Party 1860-61

The Democratic experience was different. Democrats stuck fast with an intensity of commitment and loyalty which voting and leadership studies of other states do not reveal. Of 648 names among lists of active Democrats in our sample, about fifty affiliated with other parties between 1851-61, and eighteen of these were former Whigs who shifted to Democrats. Only fourteen times did Democrats affiliate with the Republican party and only eighteen times with American-Republicans. Democratic defections were remarkably few, especially in view of the party's collapse at the polls after 1854. We conclude that antislavery and nativist causes in Rhode Island enlisted former Whigs and newcomers to politics and shared personnel, but had little appeal to Democrats.[5]

Of 423 Republicans identified, twenty-three also affiliated with American-Republicans. Former Whigs accounted for approximately thirteen percent of Republican and American-Republican party leaders and former Democrats accounted for about four percent of the leaders of these two parties. The new parties drew well over eighty percent of their numbers from men not active at the state level in any other party during the decade. Viewed in the light of these figures, disintegration of the Whig party and collapse of Democratic electoral fortunes after 1853 suggests a deep frustration with older parties. New parties apparently attracted the disaffected and those not previously committed to political activism. Although the new coalition was not strong enough to produce a single unified party, it did sweep every election until 1860.[6]

In that year the equilibrium of Rhode Island politics was rocked again. The alliance between Republicans and American-Republicans, cemented by substantial dual membership, was evidently not without its strains. As the year began, this union appeared more solid than ever as Republicans and American-Republicans joined in a single nominating convention. But when Seth Padelford, a "straight" Republican, won the gubernatorial nomination, intra-party struggles surfaced. Self-described "conservatives" in the coalition thought Padelford too radical on the slavery question and refused to support him. They bolted to a new convention and supported Democratic nominee William Sprague. In a campaign marked by large voter turnout and charges of corruption from

both sides, Sprague was elected.

In 1861 Constitutional Unionists, as these conservative rebels were called, again joined the Democrats to support Sprague. Sprague's appeal and fears of Padelford's radicalism were apparently stronger among nativist elements of the coalition.[7] Our analysis reveals that in 1860-61, of the 165 conservatives who met in state conventions only ten were formerly on Republican rolls, while twenty-four were listed among American-Republicans in previous years. It is clear that a large majority of Constitutional Unionists had not held state office or attended party conventions during the previous decade.

This analysis of political leadership makes clearer Whig and nativist domination of Republican fortunes in Rhode Island before the Civil War, a domination more intense than appears to be the case in other states. Further study is needed to clarify the meaning of persistent Democratic loyalty revealed here. Rhode Island Democrats may indeed have held fast to party principles, but there is also some evidence to suggest that they were less than fully welcome in coalition politics.[8] Whigs and nativists had long been hostile to even the most modest Democratic efforts toward franchise reform early in the decade. Bitterness seems to have persisted. The study also indicates a failure of straight Republicans and nativists to cooperate fully, and the fate of Seth Padelford may suggest the pivotal position of nativist leaders in Rhode Island politics. The analysis indicates a need for study of newcomers to political activism in the antislavery and nativist movements. More research along traditional lines may provide answers to questions raised by application of this computer technique to Rhode Island politics before the Civil War.

1 Mark L. Berger, *Revolution in New York Party Systems 1840-1860* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1973); Ronald P. Formisano, *Birth of Mass Political Parties Michigan, 1827-1861* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971); Michael Fitzgibbon Holt, *Forging a Majority: Formation of Republican Party in Pittsburgh, 1848-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).

2 Members of the state legislature, congressional delegations, general officers, and delegates to state party conventions are listed in contemporary issues of the *Providence Daily Journal* and *Providence Daily Post*. *Rhode Island Manual 1867/68* has retrospective lists of congressional delegations and general officers.

3 Peter J. Coleman, *Transformation of Rhode Island 1790-1860* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1963) ch. 6; Edward Field, ed., *State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations at the End of the Century: A History* (Boston: Mason Publishing Co., 1902) ch. 21.

4 Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men* (London, Oxford University Press, 1970) 195-205.

5 Foner, 163-166.

6 From 1854 through 1859 Democrats only once exceeded forty percent of votes cast when they polled forty-one percent in 1856.

7 While Sprague was the Democratic nominee in these years, his party identification is somewhat vague. After the start of the Civil War he prevailed as a leader of a new Republican reconciliation.

8 Thomas Davis, former Democrat and a leader among straight Republicans, complained in 1859 that nativist and old Whig influence in the coalition denied former Democrats places of influence in government and on state tickets. Thomas Davis, *Address to Electors of the Eastern Congressional District of Rhode Island* (North Providence, 1859) RIHS Library.

From the Collections

Summertime is for children and for the child in all of us. Charlotte Estey photographed these children in the Fox Point neighborhood in Providence about 1950. Estey's photographs are part of an extensive pictorial survey she made of buildings and people on South Main Street and in Fox Point.

WE BUY
WE SELL