

Providence, July 22, 1854

1. They HATE our Republic, and are trying to overthrow it.
2. They HATE the American *Eagle*, and it offends them beyond endurance to see it worn as an ornament by Americans.
3. They HATE our *Flag*, as it manifest by their grossly insulting it.
4. They HATE the liberty of conscience.
5. They HATE the liberty of the Press.
6. They HATE the liberty of speech.
7. They HATE our Common School system.
8. They HATE the Bible, and would blot it out of existence *if* they could!
9. The *Priests* HATE married life, and yet by *them is fulfilled* the Scripture, to wit: 'more are the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife.'
10. They HATE Protestants, and are sworn to *exterminate* them from our country and the earth.
11. They HATE the name of WASHINGTON, because he was a *Republican* and Protestant. 12. They HATE all rulers that do not swear allegiance to the Pope of Rome.
13. They HATE to be *ruled by Americans*, and say 'WE WILL NOT BE RULED BY THEM!'
14. They HATE to support their own paupers and they are left to be supported by the tax paying Americans.
15. They HATE, above all, the '*Know-Nothings*,' who are determined to rid this country from their accursed power.

—UNCLE SAM

The "Obligation" assumed by prospective candidates for membership is spelled out in this document emanating from Newburg, near Shippensburg, in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, July 1854.

Examiner's Duty

Examination of Candidate. Are you a candidate for membership to our order? (Candidate answers, I

am). You will place your right hand on this holy emblem (Bible).

Obligation. You do solemnly promise, declare, and swear upon that sacred and holy emblem before Almighty God, and these witnesses that you will not divulge or make known to any person whatsoever, the nature of the questions I may ask you here, the names of the persons you may see here or that you know that such an organization is going on as such, whether you become a member of our organization or not! (Candidate answers, I will)

And that you will true and faithful answers give to all the questions I may ask you, (Candidate answers, So help me God)

Are you by religious faith a Roman Catholic? (Candidate answers, I am not)

Were you born in this country? (Candidate answers, I was)

Were either of your parents? Were either of your grandparents? Were any of your ancestors in this country during the Revolutionary War? If so then:

Are you willing to use all your influence to elect to all offices of Honor, Profit, or Trust, none but native born citizens of America, of this country, to the exclusion of all foreigners and to all Roman Catholics, whether they be of native or foreign birth, regardless of all party predilections whatsoever?

(Candidate answers, I am).

Hatred and distrust of Catholics, was and in many ways still is, a common phenomenon in parts of America.

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Know-Nothing Party

It is an over-simplification to state that the American colonies were founded by people who came to the New World seeking religious freedom. It is true that the early settlers in the Northeast did seek freedom to worship in their own way—but it was a freedom that they were not prepared to give to others who might differ in belief. Religious prejudice existed between sects, and it was responsible for driving Roger Williams from Massachusetts to Rhode Island, the Puritans from Virginia to Maryland, but it was particularly virulent in the case of Catholics.

Anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic movements in American political life had their inception in the 1840s, due to the arrival of large numbers of Irish immigrants at that time and the increasing role being played by the Catholic Church in education and other areas of public life. The best known of these nativist groups, founded in 1852, came to be called the American Party, and its adherents as Know-Nothings. The aim of the Know-Nothings movement was to combat foreign influences and to uphold and promote traditional American ways. Sworn to secrecy, the Know-Nothings derived their name from their standard reply to questions about their rituals and mysteries—"I know nothing about it." The movement had considerable success in the 1850s, electing governors in Massachusetts and Delaware, and placing Millard Fillmore (1800-1874) on a presidential ticket in 1856.

The Know Nothing Party spread like wildfire throughout the country. "Americans must rule America!" was the rallying cry. Under the Know Nothings, religious bigotry reach a high point not previously attained. The party elected officials to office, and for a time held considerable power; it was anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant, terroristic, and brutal. The Know Nothings provoked riots in many sections of the country, each riot aimed at injuring Catholic immigrants.

On Election Day, 1855, in Louisville, Kentucky, the Know Nothings attacked the homes of Catholics, setting them afire; the occupants were shot as they rushed out. It is not known how many Catholics were murdered, but the newspapers estimated the number as between twenty-five and one hundred. Xaverian Brothers, who conducted a school in Louisville, were warned that the Know Nothings were marching on it with the intention of setting it afire. For two days the Brothers had to hide in the countryside. The *Louisville Journal* had the effrontery to blame foreign residents who had—supposedly—been incited by their priests.

The Know Nothings set torches to a Carmelite convent in Baltimore and an Ursuline academy near Boston. Churches in New York and Philadelphia were burned. In Boston, New York, Paterson, Philadelphia, and Louisville, the Irish residential areas were attacked. In Maine, Father John Bapst, a Jesuit, was caught by Know Nothings and was tarred and feathered, simply because he was a priest.

One of the most spiteful and petty acts committed by the Know Nothings was carried out in our nation's capital. The Washington Monument was being completed, and some foreign governments sent granite or marble blocks to be used in the construction. The gifts were made in honor of the Father of our country and to show friendship. Pope Pius IX, as sovereign of the Papal States, sent a block to be set in the monument—and his gift cause a furor. Critics proposed that a block with an anti-Papal inscription be set next to it. The quarrel was settled when a mob of Know Nothings seized the block one night and threw it in the Potomac River. That block was never recovered.

The Know Nothings gained control of many State legislatures and therein they passed nuisance laws against Catholics. Particularly offensive were the “nunnery inspections” laws, which allowed civic officials to invade the privacy of convents at awkward hours. Those laws were later found unconstitutional. The Know Nothings Even put up

candidates for the office of President. The greatest tragedy was the violence the Know Nothings provoked. Catholics were kept from voting by beatings and killings. Catholic school children were barred from public schools or forced to read the Protestant Bible.

Despite their evil accomplishments, the Know Nothings represented no one but themselves—a bigoted and lawless minority. Abraham Lincoln was only one of many Americans who repudiated them. He once wrote against the Know Nothings in words that almost might be applicable today. He said: “I am not a Know Nothing; that is certain. How could I be? How can anyone who abhors the oppression of Negroes be in favor of degrading classes of white people? Our progress in degeneracy appears to me to be pretty rapid. As a nation we began by declaring that ‘all men are created equal,’ Now we practically read it, ‘all men are created equal, except Negroes.’ When the Know Nothings get control, it will read, ‘all men are created equal, except Negroes and foreigners and Catholics.’ When it comes to this, I shall prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretense of loving liberty—to Russia for instance, where despotism can be taken pure and without the base alloy of hypocrisy.

The undoing of the Know Nothing movement resulted from mob violence, plus the incompetence of persons the members of the movement elected to office. Gradually sensible Protestants worked against the Know Nothing party, and it disappeared beneath the weighty problems facing America in pre-Civil War days. While there was a basic mistrust and suspicion of Catholics, the root of the problem was fundamentally economic. There was a fear that Catholic immigrants would depress wages and take “Protestant” jobs. There was also the threat of political control by the growing number of urban Catholics. (Re-printed from ‘Our American Catholic Heritage’ by Albert J. Nevins, M.M.)

The Know Nothing and American Crusader, a nativist newspaper published in Boston at the

height of anti-Catholic sentiment in the 1850s, published the following party platform.

The platform of the American Party called for, among other things:

- 1.—Repeal of all Naturalization Laws.
 - 2.—None but Native Americans for Office.
 - 3.—A pure American Common School System.
 - 4.—War to the hilt, on Romanism.
 - 5.—Opposition, first and last, to the formation of Military Companies composed of foreigners.
 - 6.—The advocacy of a sound, healthy, and safe Nationality.
 - 7.—Hostility to all Papal Influences, in whatever form, and under whatever name.
 - 8.—American Institutions and American Sentiments.
 - 9.—More stringent and effective Emigration Laws.
 - 10.—The amplest Protection to Protestant Interests.
 - 11.—The doctrines of the revered Washington and his compatriots.
 - 12.—The sending back of all Foreign Paupers landed on our shores.
 - 13.—The formation of Societies to protect all American Interests.
 - 14.—Eternal enmity to all who attempts to carry out the principles of a foreign Church or State.
 - 15.—Our Country, our whole Country, and nothing but our country.
 - 16.—And finally,—American Laws and American Legislation, and Death to all Foreign Influences, whether in high places or low!
- *The Know-Nothing: and American Crusader* - 15 July 1854.

Below is an example of the anti-Catholic rhetoric that spewed from the pages of this publication on 29 July 1854.

Things Which Roman Catholic Priests and all True Roman Catholics Hate.