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The Anti-Bedini Demonstration:

Nativism at Work in Wheeling in 1854

One hundred and fifty years ago Archbishop Gaetano Bedini, Papal Nuncio to the United States, visited Wheeling, Virginia during a six-month tour of the country. His visit to the United States provoked many anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant demonstrations throughout the country resulting in several deaths, many injured, and lots of property damage. Never in the history of the United States has an official visitor received such a threatening reception. In Wheeling an anti-Bedini demonstration took place, threats were made, and minor property destruction occurred, but a major incident was averted. A look at what happened in Wheeling 150 years ago, however, can let us see the tensions that existed in America at that time. Similar tensions exist in America today and immigrants are again seen as a serious problem that must be dealt with.

On Monday, January 9, 1854, *The Wheeling Intelligencer* reported that on the previous Saturday handbills had been posted in various places about the city informing residents of the arrival in Wheeling of the Papal Nuncio, Father Gaetano Bedini. The newspaper claimed that it had been unable to acquire the handbills, but did comment that more responsible members of the community had taken down the notices. Two such handbills read as follows:¹

Freeman, Arise! Bedini, the Butcher of Italian Patriots, the Tyrant of Italy is in our city! Aye, the guest of the Catholic Bishop. He is on a mission through our Union as a kind of Papal Ambassador and should nowhere be tolerated by American Freeman, as he is not worthy to breathe the free air of this Country, yet he is feted everywhere by the Jesuits, to the great annoyance of free American citizens.

Americans! Citizens of the greatest and most liberal Republic on earth, do not disgrace your reputation by tolerating such a monster as Bedini in your midst. Do not shelter one who has murdered the patriots of Italy! Give us your cooperation and help us to destroy the secret plans of the Roman missionary. The blood of the martyrs of freedom, the tears of widows and orphans, the poor down-trodden people of Italy call for revenge! Let them have it. Drive this monster back to his bloody master that sends him! Come one, come all and let the cry of the city be heard - Down with Bedini.”

Father Gaetano Bedini had arrived in Wheeling from Cincinnati on January 4, having received an invitation from Rt. Reverend Richard Vincent Whelan, the Bishop of Wheeling. *The Wheeling Intelligencer* provided the following account of troubles that arose as a result of Bedini's visit. According to the newspaper, on January 4, the women parishioners of St. James Cathedral (there was only one Catholic church in Wheeling at the time) planned to prepare a supper to be held at Washington Hall on Saturday evening as a fundraiser to help pay for the cost of finishing the Cathedral and its steeple.² None of the accounts about Bedini's visit to Wheeling indicate that he attended the supper, but certainly he must have been a featured guest.

According to the *Intelligencer* a large crowd of people assembled outside of the hall and excited the ladies within by their "occasional whoops and hallos" Nothing of consequence occurred until around 11:00 p.m., after the people attending the supper had been suffered to return home. Then, the crowd moved from Washington Hall to the Cathedral. The newspaper claimed that most of the crowd was made up of boys, who soon began throwing stones that broke a number of windows at the Cathedral. The newspaper claimed "it is the first thing (incident) of the kind we have known in Wheeling and sincerely hope it may be the last." The article condemned all such violence and claimed "we have yet to meet with the first man who justifies the lawless violence of Saturday night, however trivial may have been its consequences." the article ended by stating the incident "was the work, we hope, of mere boys, or thoughtless youth," but that it should be "the last act of riotousness and lawlessness which may mar the fair escutcheon of our city."³

A brief article in the January 10, *Intelligencer* reported that Bedini had safely left town for the east by train the previous day, but that a rumor had gone about town that "a number of persons armed with knives and revolvers intended to attack him at the depot."⁴ Another article in the same issue noted that "an effigy of the Nuncio had been burned in front of Washington Hall." The *Intelligencer* reported that there had been "no concerted plan of violence to persons or property, or if there was, that it had been abandoned in the early part of the evening" and that the incident was really only "a noisy crowd largely composed of boys without any leader, filled with the spirit of mischief and rife for a spree."⁵

The next day, the *Intelligencer* carried another brief statement about the incident, hoping to put the issue to rest. The paper wrote:⁶

Bedini.- The visit to our city of this ambassador of the Pope has created no little excitement among our citizens. The object of his visit, however, is unknown. But one thing is known, and that is, the reduction of prices and superior inducements offered to purchasers of Dry Goods at W. P Asbury's, 162 Main St.

However, the *Intelligencer* carried four more articles about Bedini during the next two weeks. On January 14, the paper ran a piece from the *Cincinnati Gazette* praising the Wheeling Mayor, Sheriff, and police officers. The *Gazette*, comparing Cincinnati and Wheeling authorities, stated:⁷

There was some excitement in the city (Wheeling) during Saturday night, particularly in front of Washington Hall, where the Catholic supper was eaten, and around the Cathedral, where two hundred armed men were said to be posted; but the night passed off without any disturbance. The Sheriff, the

Mayor, and other officers exerted themselves with praiseworthy zeal to preserve order and peace; had they been foolish and reckless as our Mayor and other officials, it would have been easy to have killed a man or two, and shot and beaten a score more, and to have the country ring with another "Bedini riot."

More short articles followed in the *Intelligencer*. One was about an anti-Bedini demonstration during the trial of Cincinnati police concerning their behavior during the riot against Bedini in Cincinnati on Christmas night 1853. A second article reported on an anti-Bedini demonstration in Baltimore on January 18.⁸ The final item to appear in the newspaper was a letter from Jeffrey L. Sangston, Wheeling's City Sergeant (chief policeman) announcing that he would not stand for reelection as City Sergeant on the next ballot. Sangston claimed:⁹

I am charged with making my office the depot for the assembling and arriving of persons who were engaged in manifesting disapprobation against Bedini in his late visit to this city. And on the other hand, I am accused with not suppressing the demonstrations, which were made against the said Bedini around Washington Hall on the night of the Catholic supper.

Sangston denied both allegations. As to the first, he claimed Alderman Booth, who had spent the whole day and slept the night at Sangston's office could testify to his innocence. Concerning the second accusation, Sangston claimed that he acted under the orders of Mayor Sobieski Brady and that the Mayor was aware of all of his actions at Washington Hall. Sangston claimed:¹⁰

. . . had I attempted to exercise any official authority over the excited crowd of three or four hundred men;-had I even arrested one of them, no person on earth, in the condition things then were, could have prevented bloodshed. The Mayor felt this and so did I; and my orders from him were therefore obeyed, because under the circumstances a mild and compliant course was the only means to preserve the peace of the city.

Sangston had served as City Sergeant from 1840-1845 and again from 1851 to 1854. Harold Chapline became City Sergeant as a result of the election from which Sangston withdrew. Sangston returned to the position of City Sergeant in 1857-1858. Sobieski Brady, the Mayor, an influential banker who frequently served as a city councilman, did not resign, nor did the affair appear to have affected his political career. Brady served as Mayor in 1847-1848, in 1853-1855, and again in 1866-1868. In the 1870's he served a term as Secretary of State for West Virginia.¹¹

James Connelly, who has written the best study of Bedini's visit to America, presents yet another version of the event of the night of January 7th. According to Connelly:¹²

The Mayor of Wheeling publicly deplored his inability to provide the necessary protection for such a distinguished visitor and so significant building, Bishop Richard Whelan, good Irishman that he was, then announced that this being the case, he would take the protection of his visitor and his Cathedral into his own hands. He asked the Mayor to make known to the rioters that the first one who dared to enter the grounds of the Cathedral would be immediately shot. The Catholics, led by their Bishop, prepared accordingly:

and, when the mob came cursing and cursing to the Cathedral on January 7, they saw the marshaled strength of the Catholics. They stopped short and abstained from actual violence.

Connelly then quotes an early writer John Shea, who stated: “One of them did throw a stone and broke a pane of glass, but as he was promptly felled to the ground by a strong arm, the mob, finding that there was serious work before them, disbanded.”¹³

Dr. Tricia Pyne provides a bit more information on the events that night. She claims a crowd formed on a street near the Cathedral and anti-Catholic speeches were made while an effigy of Bedini was burned. Armed with rocks and bats, the crowd moved towards the Cathedral. They threw rocks “at the windows of the Visitation convent and the Cathedral.” Some in the crowd called for burning down the buildings. When the crowd reached “the Bishop’s residence, they found it surrounded by an armed group of Irishmen.” The bishop then went out and asked the crowd what they wanted. When they said the Nuncio, there was further conversation between the Bishop and the crowd. The bishop carried on the conversation while the Nuncio “to slip out the back door into a wagon that awaited him.” After he was sure Bedini had time to escape, the Bishop motion to a man disguised as the Nuncio to join him. After warning the crowd not to attack them or church property or face retaliation from the armed Irishmen, the crowd let the two ride off without incident.¹⁴

There are four different versions of the same events. The *Intelligencer* version is hardly credible: Sangston’s indicates that the affair was a serious one, but offers few details; the Shea-Connelly version contains a bit of Catholic bragging, and Pyne’s account indicates the affair was potentially serious, but real trouble avoided because of the clever preparations of Bishop Whelan.

Bedini himself wrote on January 8, “Divine Providence has wished to test me once again here. Yesterday, there was a great disturbance, but thanks be to God, the night passed without disorder, but not without dangers... All our confidence is in God.” The Cardinal consulted Bishop Whelan who urged him to proceed to Washington D. C.; Bedini left by train the next day for the nation’s capital.¹⁵

The above account of Father Bedini’s visit leads to a number of important questions: Who was Bedini and what was his mission? Why did he face such hostility? What does research into his visit reveal about Wheeling in the 1850’s? What were some of the consequences of his visit for Catholics and their church in America? It is to these questions we will now turn.

Gaetano Bedini was born in a small city of Sinigaglia, in the Papal States near the Adriatic coast in 1806. Although from a poor family, Gaetano received an elementary education from the Barnabite Fathers, entered the local seminary and was ordained in 1828. He rose rapidly in the Church bureaucracy and from 1838 to 1845 served as the secretary to the Papal Nuncio (ambassador) to the Austrian empire. Bedini was then appointed as Apostolic Internuncio to the Imperial Court of Brazil, 1846-48. In Brazil he distinguished himself by helping immigrants from Germany get fair treatment. He returned to Rome just as the liberal and nationalist revolutions broke out in Italy. In 1849 Pope Pius IX appointed him Pro-legate to Bologna and later Commissioner of the Four Legations of Bologna, Ferrara, Forti, and Ravenna. In Connelly’s words “he brought peace to those provinces; helped the unemployed; aided business and trade; promoted agriculture; and interested himself in the restoration of historic

monuments.” Due to his excellent service, the Pope named him Titular Archbishop of Thebes and appointed him Apostolic Nuncio to Brazil on March 15, 1852. Bedini visited the United States from June 30, 1853 to February 4, 1854, while supposedly on his way to Brazil. He was back in Rome by 1856 and was appointed Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide in 1856. He was created a cardinal in 1861 and died three years later.¹⁶

European liberals and nationalists had a very different view of Bedini’s service to the Church and the Papacy. During 1848 and 1849 revolutionary disturbances wracked Europe. Beginning in France and Belgium, the political upheavals spread throughout the much of the continent and fighting was particularly bitter in the various German and Italian states of the time. There were then more than 300 independent German states and more than a dozen Italian ones. Liberals wanted constitutions to protect and enlarge individual personal liberties and to set limits on the power of church and state. Nationalists above all wanted political unity for all of the members of their respective ethnic communities. The autocratic Austrian emperor, with the assistance of the despotic Tsar of Russia, was most responsible for defeating the revolutionaries and frustrating the dreams of both liberals and nationalists. In Italy, Austrian troops smashed both types of revolutionary dreams with the connivance and approval of Pope Pius IX. Gaetano Bedini was seen by many of the revolutionaries, especially the Italians, as a particularly evil suppressor of revolutionary aspirations. The Freeman Society of Cincinnati, an organization of mostly German exiled European revolutionaries, deemed Bedini as “the Bloody Butcher of Ugo Bassi, who was the Patriot Chaplain of Garibaldi in the Italian Revolution in 1848, and (Bedini) was an “accessory to the brutal punishment of causing the skin of his (Bassi’s) forehead and the palms of his hands to be peeled off and he flayed alive.”¹⁷

Following the failure to achieve their goals, many of the liberal and nationalist revolutionaries fled to the United States, some to become permanent citizens and others to wait the moment the time was right to return to Europe and again do battle to bring about “liberty,” “national unity,” or both. Some of the most important of these revolutionary leaders, Louis Kossuth being the best-known example, toured American cities giving speeches denouncing the Austrian emperor and the Papacy for their crushing of the revolutionary dreams. They were often trying to raise financial and political support.

Bedini was sent to the United States by the Papacy to achieve certain objectives. First, Bedini was told to elicit help from the American hierarchy to better ensure uniformity and concord within the American Catholic Church. He was to report on the status and situation of the church, encourage, assist, and report on the efforts being made to convert negro slaves and Native Americans, and try to resolve the serious problem that had arisen between bishops and parish trustees over the ownership of church properties. He also reported on the scarcity of priests, lack of funds, and the rivalry between different nationalities in the American church. Finally, he was to deliver a special letter from the Pope to President Franklin Pierce expressing the Pope’s friendly regard for the United States and exploring the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the two states. The Papacy made contacts with the United States Department of State to make sure that Bedini and the Papal letter would be cordially received before informing the American Church hierarchy that Bedini would be making his visit. Many American church leaders were shocked and surprised that they had not been consulted about Bedini’s proposed visit and wondered about the nature of his agenda.¹⁸

Archbishop Bedini followed a very busy travel and meeting schedule following his arrival in New York City on June 30, 1853. First, he traveled to Washington D. C. to present the

Papal letter to President Pierce. Then he visited Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, Milwaukee, Indian country in the Lake Huron and Lake Michigan area, Detroit, Saratoga, and Buffalo. In each city he attended numerous church services, banquets, and meetings while assessing the state of the church. Bedini traveled to Canada, visiting especially the Montreal and Quebec from August 22 till September 22, 1853. Upon returning to the United States he visited Boston, Providence, New Haven, Buffalo, Rochester, and Albany before heading westward to Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Louisville and smaller cities along the way. He gave some thought to traveling to both St. Louis and New Orleans, but the serious demonstration and violence that occurred on Christmas night in Cincinnati unnerved him and he decided to head back east through Wheeling, Virginia. He left the United States for Europe on February 4th from New York. To avoid threatened attack at the port, Bedini was put aboard a rowboat at Staten Island and taken to his ship after it had left the dock.¹⁹

Wherever Gaetano Bedini traveled, Alessandro Gavazzi, a defrocked priest and ardent supporter of Garibaldi's nationalist revolution, it seems had been before him giving incendiary speeches denouncing the Papacy, the Catholic Church, and all those who suppress liberty. In the colorful writing of Carleton Beals, Gavazzi was²⁰

a great six-foot orator, (who) spoke 'almost savage energy.' Although a renegade, he wore a long monk's robe, embroidered over the chest with a blazing cross. His long black hair and fiery eyes were a call to violence and incendiarism. 'Popery cannot be reformed. . . Nothing but annihilation . . . I am the Destroyer.'

Gavazzi stirred up great hatred toward Bedini, the Catholic Church, and Catholics generally and frequently his intemperate speeches led to serious violence in both Canada and the United States.²¹

Gavazzi and other like-minded orators found many in America willing to listen to their harsh criticisms of Bedini, the Papacy, and the Catholic church more generally. Periodically, especially during times of rapid immigration, nativist organizations have arisen in the United States to express the fears of Americans who felt fully accepted into the fold, that new immigrants posed an imminent danger to the Republic and its traditions.

Immigration into the United State, which had slowed during the French revolutionary and Napoleonic struggles in Europe, began to increase dramatically from 1830 onward as the following table indicates:²²

Years	Numbers	Irish	Germans
1820-30	151,824	54,338	7,729
1830-40	599,125	207,381	153,454
1840-50	1,713,251	780,719	434,626
1850-60	2,598,214	914,119	951,667
1860-70	2,314,824	435,778	787,468

The number of immigrants declined sharply during the American civil war, 1861 to 1865, and then resumed growing very rapidly until the outbreak of World War I. The Irish and Germans

were the largest of these immigrant groups between 1830 and 1870. Almost all of the Irish were Catholic; many of the Germans were also. As the number of Catholics in America began to rise sharply, especially in the cities of the north, nativists in America (upholders of white, Anglo-Saxon, protestant traditions) feared that the immigrants would change America rather than become truly Americanized. They feared that the Papacy was engaged in an insidious plot to undermine American institutions and freedoms.

The growth of the institutional Catholic Church in the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century was quite rapid and the following table illustrates:²³

Category	1808	1851
Dioceses	1	41
Bishops	2	40
Archbishops	0	7
Priests	68	1,704
Churches	80	1,824
Missionary Stations	0	678
Ecclesiastical Institutions	2	37
Colleges	1	21
Female Academies	2	117

Many of the bishops were quite supportive in calling for active efforts to proselytize among the general population, encourage the immigration of Catholics, and requesting priests and financial support from Europeans to strengthen the Catholic Church in the United States. One such bishop was Richard Vincent Whelan, bishop of Wheeling from 1850 till his death in 1874.

Selected as Bishop of Richmond in 1840 and consecrated in Baltimore in 1841, Whelan was an ambitious builder. He worked hard to attract Catholic immigrants to his diocese and especially sought young priests in New York and Ireland to minister to what he hoped would be a growing Catholic population in Virginia. Whelan was convinced that the future of the church in Virginia lay in the west. Accompanied by James Ryder S. J., in 1846 Whelan had already abandoned Richmond for Wheeling, a city of 10,000 with a rapidly growing population of Irish and German Catholics. Whelan soon pushed for a division of his diocese and in 1850 the papacy approved of the splitting of the diocese into two parts; Whelan was named the bishop of Wheeling, while John McGill was named bishop of Richmond.²⁴

Whelan wrote Peter Verhaegen S. J., the superior of the Maryland province of the Jesuits in August 1846, requesting the establishment of a Jesuit college in Wheeling. Verhaegen promised to consider the proposal, but was soon replaced as superior by Ignatius Brocard. Whelan renewed his request to the new superior and also asked him to send a German speaking Jesuit who could minister to the growing German Catholic community. Brocard sent Roger Dietz S. J., who ministered to the German Catholics for a little more than a year, but he firmly dismissed all entreaties by Whelan that the Jesuits set up a school in Wheeling.²⁵

Whelan was more successful with other attempts to build catholic institutions and attract priests for the growing Catholic community in the western part of Virginia. In 1847 he laid the cornerstone for a new cathedral to replace the small church that was built in 1822. He designed and supervised the construction of the new church, which was completed and dedicated in 1849. At about the same time he asked the Sisters of Visitation, B. V. M. to send him seven nuns to

establish a female academy in Wheeling. The nuns arrived by stagecoach on April 4, 1848 and a week later opened their school with thirty students. A year later they had ninety-six students and were attracting young women from both Catholic and Protestant families in western Virginia. The academy was moved two miles east of the city in 1865 and renamed Mount de Chantal. Bishop Whelan purchased land in 1850 for the building of Wheeling Hospital, which was chartered by the Virginia Assembly in March of the same year. Two years later six nuns belonging to the Sisters of St. Joseph arrived to operate the hospital. Whelan also purchased land in 1856 and built St. Alphonsus church in the southern part of the city for the German Catholics. To pay for the buildings and to find priests and nuns to minister to the needs of his flock, Whelan requested the help of fellow bishops in New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, religious orders on the eastern seaboard, European Catholics, and the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in Rome. Whelan was just the sort of Catholic bishop that Protestant nativists were most concerned about. Whelan's invitation to Bedini to visit Wheeling during American tour was just one more means by which Whelan hoped to build the strength and numbers of the Catholic community in western Virginia.²⁶

When Gaetano Bedini, the Papal Nuncio, visited the United States in 1853-54, he came to a rapidly growing, but deeply divided country. All sorts of issues pitted Americans against one another: immigration, high vs. low tariffs, internal improvements financed by the federal government, and most threatening of all the abolitionist attack on slavery. Within less than a decade of Bedini's visit Virginia would secede from the Union and western Virginia, with Wheeling in the vanguard, would secede from Virginia.

Wheeling in 1853 was a microcosm of the nation. With a population of approximately 13,000, Wheeling was the most important city in Virginia after the capital of Richmond. Wheeling was important for its transportation facilities and its industries, both of which supplied lots of employment possibilities for the growing population. Located on the Ohio river, the city was linked to both the east and west by the National Road and the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. Key industries were: steel and nail making, boat building, glassworks, and coal mining.²⁷

As the industries grew, so did the immigration of both Irish and Germans. The Irish especially worked in the transportation industries and tended to live close to the Cathedral. German catholic immigrants tended to work in the steel, nail, and glass industries or open small retail stores and shops. Most of the German Catholics lived in Richietown, Wheeling south of Wheeling Creek. Although Germans outnumbered Irish parishioners at the Cathedral (the only Catholic parish in the city), services were in English. Germans were expected to stay in church an extra thirty minutes or so for a sermon in German, available whenever a German speaking priest visited the city. Whelan was reluctant to create a special parish and church for the Germans for two reasons. He feared there were not enough Catholics in Wheeling to financially support two independent parishes. He also was opposed to the creation of ethnic parishes on principle. Nonetheless he worked hard to ensure that the German Catholics had a German-speaking priest for most Sunday masses. Finally, in 1856 he had St. Alphonsus built in Richietown (South Wheeling) as a German parish.²⁸

The Germans in Wheeling appear to have divided into three groups. The North Wheeling Germans were generally wealthy immigrants, sixty percent of whom had been in Wheeling before 1848, and had established strong roots in the community. They tended to support the Democratic Party in politics and played a major role in creating many of the civic organizations like brass bands, orchestras, singing societies, and benevolent organizations. Richietown (South

Wheeling) was home to more recent immigrants, two-thirds of whom had arrived after 1848. Many were Catholic and their political orientation is unclear. Bishop Whelan was a strong supporter of the Democratic Party and undoubtedly influenced some to follow his lead. Another sizeable group of Germans in South Wheeling, who were also recent immigrants, had been quite active in the revolutionary activities in Europe in 1848-1849. They were strongly critical of the Catholic Church, supportive first of the Whigs and then the Republican party, and prone to political activism. In September 1852 some of them organized to host a Congress of German Revolutionaries, which gave support to the revolutionary speaker and activist, Louis Kossuth, who was touring America. These Germans were most likely the core of the opposition to Archbishop Bedini and his visit to Wheeling.²⁹

The growth in the number of Catholics in Wheeling as a result of immigration led to the rise of nativist feelings in the city, just as it did throughout the country. The chief political manifestation of this growing nativist sentiment, that sought to limit immigration and the political influence that immigrants might have, was the American Party, popularly known as the Know-Nothing Party. Organized in "New York City around 1850 as a secret society known as the Order of the Star Spangled Banner," the Know Nothings were one of many nativist anti-foreign, anti-Catholic organizations of the north. The name Know Nothing arose from the practice of members saying "I know nothing," when asked about the secretive aspects of the movement. In the congressional elections of 1854 the American Party won impressive victories in northeastern states, sending 64 men to Congress. The American Party attracted disaffected supporters of both the Whig and Democratic parties, but many more from the former than the latter. During the 1856 election the American Party nominated Millard Fillmore for President. Fillmore came in a distant third in the election, which led to James Buchanan becoming President. In Virginia the nativists threw their support to a former Whig, Thomas S. Flournoy. The Democratic Party standard bearer, Henry A. Wise toured every part of the state and made his opposition to nativist goals his most important campaign issue. Wise won the governor's race and most Virginians soon turned their attention to the issue of slavery or abolitionism. In Ohio County, however, all the Know Nothing backed candidates won their legislative positions and Wise was defeated in both the city and county even though both were considered strongly Democratic areas.³⁰

In the past I have had two students study the demonstration against Bedini in Wheeling. While both students came to believe that the topic was much to do about very little, they came to rather opposite conclusions about Bedini and whether his mission was a success. David Klug argued that while Bedini failed to achieve some of his goals, the mission generally succeeded. Archbishop Bedini wrote a detailed report on the conditions of the Catholic Church in America and identified a number of problems that Rome and the American hierarchy would need to address. He was instrumental in getting the American College in Rome established and generally made the Pope and Vatican leadership more sensitive to American needs and opportunities. In addition, American Catholics generally gave Bedini a very positive welcome and gave them a renewed sense of pride and hope.³¹ Michael Conway, however, concluded that the mission was a disaster and one that the American hierarchy and Rome courted. Conway argued that during the mid-nineteenth century Protestants were concerned about a whole range of issues: from who should own church property, the hierarchy or the trustees of the parish, to the Catholic demands for state assistance to their parochial schools. Conway had a tendency to blame the victim for his problems. He found the most important American bishops pugnacious in defense of Catholic rights and at times purposefully confrontational. He wrote: "Due to the fact that the American (Catholic) Church thought their numbers were rising faster than they were, they began to take on

an arrogant attitude more common to the Catholic Church of Europe. The Church began to think that it had political clout, and, moreover that they had gained acceptance in the popular culture. Although nothing could be further from the truth, the Church went full speed ahead shamelessly promoting itself.”³²

My own view is that Bedini’s trip was of mixed success. One of his goals was to help establish official diplomatic relations between the United States and the Vatican. He failed and it was not until 1983 that such relations were finally established. Bedini’s tour certainly helped to fuel anti-Catholic sentiment and lots of bad press. More than a century would pass before Americans would elect a Catholic as President. It has been more than forty years since Kennedy was elected and we have not seen another Catholic elected to the top spot. However, I think it was important for the Catholics to confront, even pugnaciously, the anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant prejudice of the time. The Bedini mission made this confrontation one on which the Catholic and their Protestant supporters held the high moral ground. Bedini’s report to the Pope certainly made the Papacy more knowledgeable and sensitive to the problems that the American clergy, laity, and church faced.

The consequences of the Anti-Bedini demonstrations in Wheeling appear to have had no long-term impact on the development of the Catholic Church in Wheeling nor on the coming of new immigrants to the community. This is not to say it had no impact, however. Sangston felt enough heat to withdraw his name from the ballot for City Sergeant. Moreover, it is likely that the divisions in the city exposed by the Bedini demonstration were played in other issues of the day. Citizens of the city, and indeed of the state and nation, were soon consumed by sectional strife over slavery which in 1860 would lead to the election of Abraham Lincoln, the splitting of the nation and civil war, and the splitting of Virginia into two states.

For the last thirty years Americans have experienced a new wave of massive immigration, both legal and illegal, in the country. Again, many Americans have begun to question whether the new immigrants desire or even can *Americanize*. Whether they *Americanize* or not, America will change in many ways, just as it did in the past when new peoples found America home.

¹ *The Wheeling Intelligencer*, Vol. 2, no. 114, January 9, 1854, p. 2. The handbills are reprinted in Rev. James Connelly, *The Visit of Archbishop Gaetano Bedini to the United States of America (June 1853-February 1854)*, Libreria Editrice Dell’Universita Gregoriana, Rome, 1960, p. 115.

² *The Wheeling Intelligencer*, January 9, 1854, p. 2

³ *The Wheeling Intelligencer*, January 9, 1854, p. 2.

⁴ *The Wheeling Intelligencer*, January 10, 1854, p. 3.

⁵ *The Wheeling Intelligencer*, January 10, 1854, p. 3.

⁶ *The Wheeling Intelligencer*, January 11, 1854, p. 3.

⁷ *The Wheeling Intelligencer*, January 14, 1854, p. 3.

⁸ *The Wheeling Intelligencer*, January 19, 1854, p. 2 and p. 3.

⁹ *The Wheeling Intelligencer*, January 23, 1854, p. 3.

¹⁰ *The Wheeling Intelligencer*, January 23, 1854, p. 3.

¹¹ Gibson Lamb Cramner, *History of Wheeling and Ohio County, West Virginia and Representative Citizens*, Chicago, Il. 1902, p. 185-86 and John Newton, G. Nichols, and A. G. Spankle, *History of the Pan-Handle, West Virginia*, J. A. Caldwell, Wheeling, W. V. 1871, p.

¹² Connelly, p. 116.

¹³ Connelly, p. 116 and John Shea, *History of the Catholic Church in the United States*, New York, D. H. McBride, 1936 p. 436.

¹⁴ Tricia T. Pyne, *Faith in the Mountains: A History of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, 1850-2000*, Editions du Signe, Strasbourg, France, 2000, pp. 16-17.

¹⁵ Connelly, p. 116-17.

¹⁶ Connelly, pp. 288-90.

¹⁷ Connelly, pp. 294-97, *New York Times*, July 29, 1853, for a letter from Gavazzi on Bedini.

¹⁸ Connelly, p. 5-15.

¹⁹ Connelly, pp. 16-156.

²⁰ Carleton Beals, *Brass-Knuckle Crusade: the Great Know-Nothing Conspiracy: 1820-1860*, Hasting House Publishers, New York, 1960, pp. 124-25.

²¹ *New York Times*, see an account of Gavazzi's activities in New York in articles published on March 25, 1853, in Quebec on June 12th, in Montreal on June 13th, and again in New York on June 15th.

²² Roger Daniels, "Immigration and Immigrants," in *Encyclopedia of the United States in the Nineteenth Century*, Scribners, New York, 2001, Vol. 2, p. 53 and Roger Daniels, "The Immigrant Experience," in *Encyclopedia of the United States in the Nineteenth Century*, Scribners, New York, 2001, Vol. 2., p. 58.

²³ Conway, Michael. *In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Hateful Spirit: anti-Catholicism in 19th Century America*, unpublished Senior Seminar paper, Wheeling Jesuit University, 2002, p. 5. Conway took his statistics from an anti-Catholic polemical tract by Thomas R. Whitney, *A Defense of American Policy, as Opposed to the Encroachments of Foreign Influence, and especially to the Interference of the Papacy in the Political Interests and Affairs of the United States*, New York, De Witt and Davenport, 1856, p. 116.

²⁴ Gerald P. Fogarty S. J. *Commonwealth Catholicism: A History of the Catholic Church in Virginia*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, In., 2001, pp.. 80-93.

²⁵ Fogarty, p. 91-92.

²⁶ Fogarty, pp. 80-104, Pyne, 6-21.

²⁷ Doug Fetherling, *Wheeling: An Illustrated History*, Woodland Hills, Ca., Windsor Publications, 1983, pp. 33-51.

²⁸ John M. Lenhart O. F. M. Cap, *History of Saint Alphonsus Church*, Wheeling, 1956, pp. 20-26.

²⁹ Ken Fones-Wold, "Caught Between Revolutions: Wheeling Germans in the Civil War Era," in Ken Fones-Wolf and Ronald Lewis, ed. *Transnational West Virginia*, Morgantown, University of West Virginia Press, 2002, pp. 18-24.

³⁰ John David Bladek, "Virginia is Middle Ground," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Winter 1998, Vol 106, No. 1, 35-65 and Cramner, pp. 176-77, and Fogarty, pp. 119-28.

³¹ David Klug, *A Secret Success of A Nuncio's Visit*, Unpublished Senior Seminar Thesis, December, 1989, pp. 19-22.

³² Conway, pp. 11-14.

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