Hijinks on the Hudson?

Today it can sound like a cliché, but “follow the money” is actually pretty good advice if you’re a reporter looking to get a foothold on a story. It’s also been just as useful to me in my work as a historian who looks at the intersection of business, politics, and public infrastructure, the field we broadly call “political economy.”

Since I first started looking into an 18th-century water company-turned-bank called the Manhattan Company back in 2003, I’ve been following the money in New York during the early republic—to banks, steamboats, railroads, and the Erie Canal. Eleven years later I’m checking copyedits for what will soon be my first book on the subject. But in between teaching, a new project on corruption, and the rest of academic life, I’ve also spent a good portion of this year on the third floor of 30 Rockefeller Plaza on MSNBC talking about bridges, infrastructure, and New Jersey politics. This wasn’t how I expected to be using my PhD, but here’s why being a historian of the early republic helped prepare me for an ongoing twenty-first-century political economy caper.

I can tell you exactly when I became interested—really interested—in the scandal we call Bridgegate.

1. Brian Murphy, in an appearance on The Rachel Maddow Show on MSNBC, February 21, 2014. Photo courtesy of MSNBC

On Wednesday, January 8, 2014, Chris Hayes opened his 8 p.m. MSNBC show with a roundup of the latest news out of New Jersey regarding the weeklong September 2013 lane closures on the George Washington Bridge. New documents had come to light showing that in August a top member of New Jersey Governor Chris

Christie's staff had been in touch with one of Christie's top appointees at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (the agency that owns and operates the bridge), informing him that it was "time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee." In response the appointee e-mailed back, "got it."

Hayes spent the next few minutes walking viewers through other revelations in the document leak, which linked other top Port Authority officials and members of Christie's team to the lane closures and made clear that, despite claims to the contrary, Fort Lee's local traffic woes had not been caused by a "traffic study."

I know almost all of the people involved in this story. Before I went to graduate school at the University of Virginia, I had been a reporter at *Money* magazine, writing about financial markets and mutual funds. During the 2000 presidential election, I left *Money* to write for *George* magazine, where I continued to look at finance and how it intersected with national politics. In early 2001 *George* folded, and I briefly ended up working for a New Jersey state senator and then a newly elected assemblyman. It was in that job that I first met David Wildstein, who owned and operated a political news Website called *PoliticsNJ.com*. Wildstein later became the Christie appointee who would write "got it" and actually implement the lane changes.

In early 2002, David hired me to be the site's first full-time reporter. In that job I covered Chris Christie when he was a U.S. attorney in New Jersey. I met Bridget Kelly, the woman who sent the "time for some traffic problems" e-mail, back when she was an aide to a mild-mannered Republican assemblyman from Bergen County. I became a friend of Bill Baroni, who later became a top political appointee at the Port Authority, back when he was a candidate for the state legislature. When I left reporting to go to graduate school, Bill and I kept in touch. He was a UVA law school alum, and when he came to Charlottesville for reunion events we occasionally went to football games. During one of those visits I met his successor at the Port Authority, who is also a UVA law grad. I kept in touch with many of the people I met in New Jersey politics, from legislative aides to reporters, to even a few members of Congress. So when politicians showed up in newspaper articles and on television expressing outrage about this new story involving the George Washington Bridge, I had people to e-mail and call. I already knew some of the state legislators leading the investigation.

> Working as a journalist had helped me see a set of questions that I knew I would never have the time, space, or guidance to explore as a reporter.

But I did not know and had never met the mayor of Fort Lee, Mark Sokolich, who was Chris Hayes's guest that night during what I now know is called the A-block—the first segment of a television broadcast.

Sokolich is a tall, affable real estate attorney. During the September 2013 lane closures he had written to Bill Baroni asking for a meeting, hoping that he wasn't being punished for declining an invitation to endorse the Republican incumbent Christie across party lines in the November 2013 gubernatorial election.

I watched Sokolich's back-and-forth with Hayes to take a measure of the man who claimed that he had no idea why he or his town might have been targeted by the Christie administration. Then Sokolich said something really interesting:

"And I'll tell you, we've done phenomenal things in Fort Lee, and that truly is the tragedy here, we're in the middle of a renaissance, we're in the middle of a billion dollar redevelopment, we are arguably the most progressive community in the state of New Jersey run by this idiot [Christie], and we should be applauded for that, not penalized for it."

A billion dollar redevelopment.

I remember sitting with my wife on our couch and saying: "So why is a local mayor nobody's ever heard of from a town nobody's ever heard of using time during his national television debut to mention that?"

The next day Governor Christie gave a marathon lunchtime press conference with what I thought was an internally contradictory narrative. A half hour later David Wildstein refused to testify before a state legislative panel but, through his lawyer, offered to talk if given immunity from federal and state prosecution. The following day, the legislature released more than 2,000 pages of subpoenaed documents—e-mails, text messages, letters, and memos—relating to the bridge lane closures.

2. Traffic problems in September 2013 on the George Washington Bridge, viewed from the Manhattan side of the Hudson River, proved to be the thread that reporters followed to the larger story of the confluence of money and power in New Jersey politics. Photo by Fly Navy, and used here under a Creative Commons license.

I read all of it. Most of it that day and into the night. This was how it started for me.

Truth be told, I hadn't been following Bridgegate throughout the fall. My wife gave birth to our daughter on September 30 as I was furiously trying to finish revisions on my book manuscript and renovations to our kitchen. Then in mid-October my father woke up with double vision in his right eye, something that turned out to be the first symptom of an aggressive lymphoma. He died three

weeks later in an ICU. He was 69.

Devastated, all I could do after that was work to finish the manuscript he would never see finished—a heavily revised reboot of my dissertation about political economy and state formation in New York in the early republic. I was rewriting a chapter on the Erie Canal and what I see as a monumental decision by New York lawmakers and canal promoters to finance the project with state-backed bonds rather than stocks, which would have conveyed ownership of the project to private investors. This was a pivotal moment in public infrastructure finance and the application of political economy principles that tried to sort out distinctions between public and private interests. In the back of my mind as I worked on the book was Robert Moses and Robert Caro's biography of him, *The Power Broker*, one of the most important books ever written about power and infrastructure. So was work by other distinguished scholars of the early American economy like John Larson, Cathy Matson, and Peter Onuf.

I went to graduate school to study with Peter because I was interested in looking at the intersection of politics and finance within larger institutional and jurisdictional federal frameworks. This had been the main question that interested me as a magazine journalist, and I likely would have kept on working it at *George* magazine or elsewhere had the presidential election of 2000 turned out differently. But Al Gore lost and my chance to become a White House correspondent slipped away. Then *George* folded and the economy slipped into a recession. After 9/11 it was clear that time was precious, and I revisited the idea of going to graduate school.

Working as a journalist had helped me see a set of questions that I knew I would never have the time, space, or guidance to explore as a reporter. I had done stories that touched on lobbying and financial regulation, and I had gone to enough political fundraisers to see how transactional policymaking could be. I knew that many legislators were not policy wonks; if you interviewed them about legislation they supported, and even bills named after them, they did not necessarily know what was inside. On the other hand, you could bet that their staffs and lobbyists with an interest in those bills did; they knew exactly what was at stake in the wording of particular subsections and clauses. But being able to detect when and why bills are drafted or amended isn't ordinarily possible in conventional political reporting undertaken with conventional methods. Influence is hard to detect at the moment it's exercised, and favors are often part of a long game. Campaign finance disclosures just cannot capture the scale or nuance of the economy of influence that is the backdrop to our political economy. Similarly, the disciplinary boundaries of political, legal, and economic history, even when only lightly enforced, can obscure the bridge-building connections forged by early American political entrepreneurs who married finance to political connections and legislative skill in order to build the nation's first financial and transportation infrastructure projects.

Before I applied, my undergraduate advisor at Haverford College, Roger Lane,

wisely and responsibly cautioned me that it would not be easy to find an academic job. Truth be told, I was never under any other impression, and I wasn't really going to graduate school to find a specific career anyway. I finished college knowing that there were things I wanted to study more deeply, and for a time being a reporter had quenched that desire. If I could get lucky enough to land a decent job in academia, that would be great. But if I ended up not having any good career options in academia when it was all over, so be it. I was going to do the best work I could do to take on questions that I could not avoid, which in my mind was—and remains—a perfectly respectable reason to go to graduate school if you can do so without incurring loads of debt.


3. New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, pictured here on July 1, 2013. Photo by May S. Young, and used here under a Creative Commons license.

Sometime after I decided to go to UVA, I briefly took a job with *PoliticsNJ.com,* run by an anonymous editor who went by the name of a long-deceased governor of New Jersey named Walter "Wally" Edge. Wally, I learned years later, was David Wildstein. David/Wally taught me a lot about power, and one of the more interesting things I observed while working for him was how much power is wielded by people whose names never appeared on a ballot and who operate in a mixed economy where public and private interests collide. In New Jersey, you might think that the political system bends to the will of a small group of public figures: the leaders of the state legislature or the governor, and maybe a few political party bosses and fundraisers. But in truth, some of the most influential political operators can be found at three agencies most people have never heard of: the Casino Redevelopment Authority (think Atlantic City), the Sports and Exposition Authority (which runs the Meadowlands and Giants Stadium), and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (in charge of tunnels, airports, the World Trade Center, and of course the George Washington Bridge).

There were 2,040 pages of documents released in seven appendices on January 10, 2014, the day after Wildstein refused to testify to the New Jersey legislature. I began reading them at lunchtime after collating them into a single PDF that I ran through optical character recognition software to make them text-searchable. I also started taking notes and began building a rough timeline in a spreadsheet.

One of our great strengths as historians is that, like journalists, we are trained to not be intimidated by paper. We can organize information. Put us in a room full of boxes at an archive and we can use close reading, tenacity, and patience to sift through it all to find the dozen pieces of paper we need to tell a story. Even if not all of us write narrative history, we can rely on narratives to build persuasive cases that tease out tension and illustrate

change over time.

4. This lithograph from 1825 reflects the scale of the Erie Canal as an infrastructure project. “Deep Cutting Lockport,” lithograph, 12.5 x 19 cm., by Imbert’s Lithographic Office (New York, 1825). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

As I kept reading through the documents, I had the growing suspicion that the Fort Lee mayor’s throwaway line about a real estate development was significant. Sometime that Friday night I chatted with another former David Wildstein employee, Steve Kornacki, who hosts a weekend morning show on MSNBC. Over the course of three hours we started pulling together documents from Fort Lee’s local government Website—minutes of city council and planning board meetings—along with financial disclosures from the developers behind the billion dollar project, news articles, and items from within the newly released documents. Steve and I thought we had found something important. We had evidence showing that the lane closures jeopardized sensitive late-stage financing of the redevelopment project Mayor Sokolich had mentioned two nights earlier, and that people at the Port Authority were aware that the project’s viability hinged on its proximity to the George Washington Bridge. As I later wrote in a story for the political news site TalkingPointsMemo.com, “the Hudson Lights project is a billion dollar project because it offers unparalleled access to the George Washington Bridge. But take away that access and it’s no longer a billion dollar project.”

With the same exhilaration I felt after making a key discovery in a box of archival materials at the New-York Historical Society, I climbed into bed around 3 a.m. saying “I think we found something really big here.” Steve and I reconnected after he was finished with his Saturday morning broadcast and invited me to come on his show on Sunday, where he presented our reporting. I wrote up a version of the story at TalkingPointsMemo.com, owned by Joshua Marshall, who also has a PhD in history from Brown University (he was a Gordon Wood student). The following day, the mayor of Hoboken reached out to Steve saying she had a story to tell—and that she had documents to back it up. Her allegations are now at the center of a federal investigation that, according to recent reports, is targeting the former chairman of the Port Authority and possibly Governor Christie as well. Our reporting, then, relied on a mix of convincing people to give us things and a close reading of things that were already in the public domain, hidden in plain sight—in short, a combination of the skills I had gained as a reporter and the research habits I had learned as a historian. The timeline I began building has yielded several headlines, one of which was significant enough that MSNBC brass brought me in for a meeting to make me one of their official contributors.

For me, none of these insights would have jumped out had I not spent the better part of a decade thinking about how financial and transportation infrastructure

projects were incorporated and structured into a public-private mixed economy regime that exists within a layered federal union of divided and competing jurisdictions—even though the projects I had been thinking about for ten years took place in the 1810s and ’20s. Within American government, parties do not field candidates and electioneer only to win elections; they have priorities and agendas driven by both ideological convictions and material interests.

When I began thinking about how an institution like the Port Authority fit into partisan politics in New Jersey and into Bridgegate specifically, the questions were framed by my past work on the 1799 founding of the Manhattan Company (founded by Aaron Burr to provide clean water to lower Manhattan, the company also had banking privileges; in 1955 it would merge with Chase National Bank to become Chase Manhattan, now part of J.P. Morgan Chase & Co.). New York Republicans considered the company to be an essential factor behind Jefferson’s election as president in 1800. Back in 2002 I began wondering why would a water utility that ran a bank mattered so much for electioneering. In time, I realized that it had really been a tool for party development. This newly incorporated bank enabled Republicans to offer discretionary financial rewards to their allies, recruit new supporters, and punish mutinies, all while offering New York voters an institutional alternative to the city’s Federalist-run banks, which were dominated by Alexander Hamilton. My research on the Manhattan Company (originally a seminar paper in graduate school) eventually became an article in the *William and Mary Quarterly* and a revised chapter of my book, *Building the Empire State*. Intellectually that piece set the trajectory for much of the work I do by establishing a fixed point for me to begin thinking about political economy in a sustained way.

After a few years of presenting work that garnered feedback from colleagues in the Early American Seminar at Virginia and a few conferences’ worth of supportive SHEAR audience members, it was becoming clearer to me that material interests—something I don’t want to necessarily label as “greed,” but rather an interest in extracting benefits and turning profits—was at the heart of early American state formation. Competing ideologies of liberalism and republicanism that dominate the historiography seemed less immediately relevant to the group of people I study than what seems to me to be a widespread assumption that one of the fundamental purposes of government is to foster commercial relations by actively and aggressively structuring the economic marketplace. The landscape of political opportunity in the early republic was defined not only by public laws and regulations adopted by legislators and enforced by courts. It was also dotted with corporations that mobilized private capital and sought public benefits to serve both public and private interests by building a financial infrastructure of banks and commercial enterprises that depended on a transportation infrastructure of roads, bridges, steamboats, canals, telegraphs, and railroads. The high-minded way to look at the ensuing institutional matrix was to see it as knitting together an expanding union by manufacturing common material interests among distant citizens; a more *realpolitik* take would be to say that political entrepreneurs were searching for ways to make politics profitable. Although twentieth-century reformers

tried to professionalize and depoliticize these practices by creating agencies like the Port Authority, in reality they pushed those politics out of view. In spite of its professional engineering and management staff, the Port Authority has proven to be incredibly vulnerable to partisan tampering and responsive to political pressure, reinforcing my contention that the agency's eighteenth- and nineteenth-century antecedents are all the more relevant to how we understand it today.

5. An Act of Incorporation of the Manhattan Company (New York, 1799). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

I bring all of this work to the reporting I've done for TPM and MSNBC—it's impossible to stop being an early Americanist, even when you're on television. If there were footnotes to accompany television segments, they'd be populated with the scholarship of Richard John, Andy Shankman, and Cathy Matson, not to mention Sean Adams, Robert Wright, Johann Neem, and Brian Balogh. I read court cases differently because of the way Chuck McCurdy taught his legal history seminar. I think about alliances in light of the Aaron Burr letters edited by Mary-Jo Kline and the work of Joanne Freeman. And I cannot even begin to imagine how I would have put any of those early stories together without Peter Onuf's guiding influence. There is no time on a 7-minute-long television segment with 5 minutes of "talk time" to properly offer these credits. But make no mistake—the work I've done on the events of 2013 flows directly from the work I and other historians have done on the early 1800s.

I appreciate that being a contributor for a cable news network is not an easily replicable model for how to be a publicly engaged academic. But I would say this: as historians we are blessed with numerous avenues to reach the public. Many of these have been catalogued in response to Nicholas Kristof's New York Times column calling on scholars to be more engaged in public life. Kristof offered us only a narrow set of options when, in reality, we can do so much more through a vast array of media.

The challenge is to take those opportunities when they arise. I see no conflict in doing reporting on a major modern New York institution and a national political story while also being a history professor. My colleagues and my dean at Baruch have been nothing but supportive. Some other colleagues in the field, however, have referred to all this as "a distraction," as if the opportunity to discuss transportation agencies and political institutions in front of an audience of 750,000 viewers is something I should be worried about. It is an odd thing to wake up at 5 a.m. on a weekend, put on a shirt and tie, get driven into New York, and put on makeup, only to be on camera for 5 or maybe 10 minutes. As historians, we don't usually get to see the inner workings of the news cycle, or labor over things where we can't discuss work in progress. It's more than a little ironic that the biggest story I've ever worked on is happening for me more than twelve years since I "left" journalism. But how

often do you get to be a part of a story that gets enough attention that you can tell friends and family—in complete seriousness—that even if they miss your television appearance, they'll still hear about your latest work by putting on news radio or checking the wires soon after?

But rather than being distracted by this media work, reporting on the intersection of politics and money in New York and New Jersey in 2014 has only sharpened the focus that I bring to studying the intersection of politics and money in New York and New Jersey in 1820.

Historians are trained to understand narrative and provide context. We understand tension and can spot change over time. Those instincts make our voices valuable in the public sphere, and we cannot afford to retreat inward at moments when our presence is welcomed and even needed. As a state senator said to me in the green room outside Studio 3A after I walked him through the redevelopment story back in January: "You guys see that it's all about land," he said, "and you get what politics is really about in this state: wringing as much f—ing money out of the system as you possibly can before you get caught."

The only way you begin to understand a "system" like that is by looking at its origins and its history. If this story had fallen into my lap in 2001 I might not have known what to do with it. I had to become a historian to try to get a handle on the present.

This article originally appeared in issue 14.4 (Summer, 2014).

Brian Phillips Murphy is an assistant professor of history at Baruch College, City University of New York. His first book, Building the Empire State, will be published by the University of Pennsylvania Press in 2015.

Slavery and American Catholicism

or, Please Don’t Accuse Me of Being Theodore Parker Incarnate

Whenever I attend panels or professional conferences that are about religious toleration—such as the wonderful conference the Newport Historical Society recently hosted to mark the 350th anniversary of Rhode Island’s charter (The Spectacle of Toleration)—I am usually struck by the way scholars who don’t specialize in American Catholic history speak about the anti-Catholicism that characterized American life in the nineteenth century.

“It was clearly wrong” is the message that is almost always conveyed—implicitly for the most part, but sometimes even overtly. The religious leaders and politicians who railed against the evils of popery and warned of the dire consequences that would develop if immigrants who had been “educated under the despotic governments of Catholic Europe” were allowed to “settle down upon the unoccupied territory of the West” were obviously religious bigots. In the case of ministers like Lyman Beecher and Jedidiah Morse, we’re looking at men whose status at the top of the theological food chain was threatened by Unitarianism and disestablishment, and so they lashed out at the Church of Rome because Catholics were the clearest evidence of the Gomorrah they believed America was slouching towards. In the case of mayors like Philadelphia’s Robert Conrad and Boston’s Jerome V.C. Smith, we’re looking at men whose status at the top of the political food chain was threatened by an influx of immigrant Catholic voters into the Democratic party’s ranks, and so they leveraged the anti-slavery sentiment in their cities and got their supporters to the polls by emphasizing long-standing, Protestant associations between Catholicism and slavery.

Rarely at these conferences does anyone give serious consideration to the possibility that people like Morse, Beecher, Conrad, and Smith might actually

have been correct—not in the extremity of their paranoia, of course, but in their basic insistence that there was something a little bit incompatible between the mindset of pre-Vatican II Catholics and the understanding that most Americans had in the nineteenth century of what freedom was and how it ought to operate on the individual soul or voter.

> Is it any wonder that American Catholic thinkers have drawn upon W.E.B. Dubois' idea of "twoness" to describe the "unreconciled strivings" that come with being an American and a Catholic?

What is curious about this unwillingness of non-specialists in American Catholic history to entertain the possibility that nineteenth-century anti-Catholicism might have been rooted in something real is that historians who focus on the American Catholic experience have acknowledged for many years now that there was (and to some extent still is) a fundamental tension between "American" and "Catholic" values. Granted, polemicists like George Weigel and Michael Novak would have us believe that there is a seamless philosophical and even theological line running from "Thomas Aquinas to [the Italian Jesuit] Robert Bellarmine to the Anglican divine, Richard Hooker; then from Hooker to John Locke to Thomas Jefferson." In an essay kicking off the American Catholic bishops' campaign against the Affordable Care Act in 2012, Weigel insisted that the United States owes more to Catholics for its tradition of religious liberty "than the Sage of Monticello likely ever knew."

But among those writers on Catholicism who have been motivated by a desire to engage with a faithful rendering of the past (rather than a desire to use history to dismantle the signature legislative achievement of a Democratic president), the consensus is that American Catholics have been animated, in historian Jay Dolan's words, by "two very diverse traditions," one exemplified by "Thomas Aquinas and Ignatius of Loyola," and the other exemplified by "Jefferson and Lincoln."

Dolan has been joined by John McGreevy, Jim O'Toole, Mark Massa, and others in acknowledging that—to quote Massa —"in the history of Western Christianity, there have been two distinctive (and to some extent, opposing) conceptual languages that have shaped how Christians understand God and themselves." The first language—which shapes the world of people who have been raised as Catholics, American or otherwise—"utilizes things we know to understand things we don't know, including and especially God." The Church, in this language, becomes an incarnation of Jesus—its community and the doctrines and hierarchies that govern that community and can be known and experienced by the community's members become a tangible (dare we even say "fleshy"?) way for Catholics to comprehend God and the salvation that God promises. The mindset that emerges from a language such as this, according to Mark Massa, is one that exhibits a "fundamental trust and confidence in the goodness of … human institutions."

The second language, utilized by Protestant theologians from Martin Luther and

Jean Calvin to Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich, emphasizes the "fact of human estrangement and distance from God." In this language, it is the Word—the message of judgment and grace, embodied in Christ and found not in the institution of the Church, but in the sanctified lines of Scripture—that convicts the soul, convinces it of its sinfulness, and "prepares us for an internal conversion that makes us true children of God." The mindset that emerges from language such as this is one that tends to be suspicious of institutions and sees them as distractions that stand between the individual and the Word. Doctrines and hierarchies are "potentially an idolatrous source of overweening pride," Massa writes; the danger in them is that they are corruptible examples of human beings' mistaken belief that they can save themselves.

Not all Protestant denominations, of course, have felt the need to jettison the sacramental language that uses the institution of the Church to know and understand God, even as they have embraced an understanding of salvation that sees it as an individual exercise centered entirely upon Scripture. High Church Anglicanism and certain strains of Lutheranism are examples of Protestant denominations that continue to emphasize the idea that the Church—its rituals and traditions—is the embodiment of Christ.

"Lyman Beecher," lithograph by Leopold Grozelier for S.W. Chandler & Bro., published by John Ross Dix (Boston, ca. 1853-1856). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Lutherans and High Church Anglicans, however, did not dominate the political and cultural landscape in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America. Neither did Roman Catholics. Congregationalists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Unitarians dominated that landscape. And these groups, then—and the staunchly Protestant understanding they had of the relationship between God and humanity, the individual and the community, liberty and authority, and rights and responsibilities—were what shaped American identity during those first few decades that followed independence from Great Britain. Given this reality, is it any wonder that American Catholic thinkers have drawn upon W.E.B. Dubois' idea of "twoness" to describe the "unreconciled strivings" that come with being an American and a Catholic?

Theodore Parker recognized the unreconciled nature of American and Catholic strivings, and he worried—passionately—that when push came to shove, American Catholics would privilege their respect for hierarchy and authority over any respect for liberty and individual rights that they might have developed during their time in America. Naturally, Parker did not phrase his concerns in quite this way; the outspoken minister from Massachusetts who believed that *Unitarianism*, of all things, was in need of liberal reform was never one for subtlety. "The Roman Catholic Church … is the natural ally of tyrants and the irreconcilable enemy of freedom," Parker announced in a sermon that he

delivered in Boston in June of 1854. As such, “it hates our free churches, free press, and above all our free schools.”

Abolitionists in Boston were up in arms that summer, thanks to the arrest and trial of the fugitive slave Anthony Burns, who was subsequently returned to his master in Virginia in accordance with the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Theodore Parker wanted his listeners to understand that they would not be able to count on Boston’s growing Catholic population to support the abolitionist movement. “Individual Catholics in America are inconsistent,” he conceded, and did, occasionally, “favor the progress of mankind.” Such people were “exceptional,” however, as the vast majority of Catholics did whatever their priests told them to do. “The Catholic worshiper is not to think, but to believe and obey,” Parker instructed his Protestant audience. The problem with that prescription was that “the Catholic clergy are on the side of slavery.” The labor system was “an institution thoroughly congenial to them,” and recognizing that slavery was “an ulcer which will eat up the Republic,” Catholic priests and bishops in America sought to “stimulate and foster [slavery] for the ruin of democracy, the deadliest foe of the Roman hierarchy.”

There was some truth to what Parker was saying—as discomfiting as that fact may be to twenty-first-century scholars, steeped as they are in the principles of religious pluralism. As George Weigel’s comments about Aquinas and Jefferson make clear, Catholicism is a faith that prides itself on its conservatism and points proudly to its unbroken, historical and theological connection to the earliest propagators of global Christianity: Peter and Paul, who spoke of the mutually beneficial relationship between a master and his slave; Augustine of Hippo, who insisted that slavery, while not a requirement of Natural Law, was a natural consequence of Original Sin; Thomas Aquinas, who believed that slavery brought order to a fallen world where some people were born without an ability to govern themselves; and St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit order that served the Catholic population in colonial and early-national America and was responsible for the church’s early institutional and intellectual development in the United States, who implied that slavery could be a powerful tool in the church’s fight against the spread of Protestantism.

Theodore Parker was not wrong to have observed that Catholicism had constructed a complex understanding of slavery’s necessary role in human relations. Long before evangelical leaders managed to convince Protestant planters that it was fine for them to hold their fellow Christians in bondage (and fine, therefore, for them to allow ministers into the slave quarters to effect evangelical conversions among their bondsmen), Catholics in early eighteenth-century Maryland were having their slaves baptized—and then burying them years later in cemeteries that also held the remains of white Catholics. They were designating their slaves as godparents to their own, white children and arranging for priests to oversee slave marriages, even though slaves were not legally allowed to marry in the colony. There was nothing about the Catholic understanding of human existence, in other words, that suggested slavery was incompatible with the will of God.


“Robert T. Conrad. First Mayor of the Consolidated City of Philadelphia,” mezzotint by John Sartain after the daguerreotype by M.A. Root, published by Henry Sartain (Philadelphia, 1855). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Even Pope Gregory XVI’s 1839 condemnation of the international slave trade, *In Supremo Apostolatus*, stopped short of calling for the emancipation of people who were already enslaved. This was not an oversight, according to Charleston’s Bishop John England. Yes, the papal letter referred to human trafficking as “inhumane commerce” and admonished “all believers in Christ” to not “unjustly … reduce to slavery Indians, Blacks, and other such peoples.” But Gregory’s use of the words “unjustly” and “reduce”—in Latin, *injuste* and *redigere*—was not accidental, England wrote to Secretary of State John Forsyth, who had previously served as the governor of Georgia. It meant that Pope Gregory was not condemning slavery as it was practiced in the United States; after all, no one in America was “reducing those who were previously free into slavery” anymore.

Theodore Parker’s mistake was not his observation that there was something “congenial” about Catholicism’s relationship with slavery, even or especially slavery in the United States. His mistake was his conviction that Catholics thought of slavery as an “ulcer” that would “eat up the Republic,” and that they supported slavery, therefore, as part of their plan to bring about the “ruin of democracy.” In fact, quite the opposite may have been true.

Historian John McGreevy has pressed modern-day Catholics to accept that the support lent to slavery by Catholic leaders such as Philadelphia’s Bishop Francis Kenrick and Augustin Martin, bishop of Natchitoches, Louisiana, was more than just an angry response to the anti-Catholic tenor of the abolitionist movement. Answering the question of why “so few Catholics … became abolitionists,” McGreevy tells us, “requires consideration of the divide separating liberals from Catholics during much of the nineteenth century.” Catholics had a “wariness about liberal individualism,” seeing it as a source of “social disorder.” This wariness, McGreevy writes, helps to explain why they were “predisposed … to resist pleas for immediate emancipation.”

But the divide between nineteenth-century Catholics and the liberal individualism that defined American identity did more than simply cause Catholics to resist the idea of immediate emancipation. It also made them deeply dependent upon the institution of slavery for their understanding—and, more important, their *acceptance*—of the republican foundation upon which America’s political culture was built. This foundation was, in many respects, anathema to Catholicism. In the words of Father Joseph Mobberly, a Jesuit who was born in Maryland in 1779, it was “a brother to the great protestant principle that … ‘every man has a right to read and interpret the Scriptures, and consequently, to form his religion on them according to his own notion.'”

It’s not that there were no rights within Catholicism; it’s not that there was no freedom. True freedom, however—at least for a Catholic—was not the purview of the individual, the way it was for an American. True freedom could be found only within the community and with the assistance of the leadership of the Church.

Yet, support for the independence movement in colonial America—a liberal movement that emphasized individual freedom and promised republican government—was greater among Catholics than it was among Protestants, except, perhaps, for the Protestants living in Massachusetts and Virginia. In the late eighteenth century, Maryland was home to the vast majority of English-speaking Catholics in British North America. Men there such as Henry Neale, Luke Mattingly, and Ignatius Combs enlisted in the Continental Army and served on Committees of Safety, even as Catholic leaders in Europe, such as Father Arthur O’Leary of Ireland, condemned the war as a “sedition” that would almost certainly “exclude [them] from the kingdom of Heaven.” Ignatius Fenwick, John Dent, and Thomas Semmes helped to draft a new constitution for Maryland as Charles Carroll of Carrollton signed the Declaration of Independence and Thomas Sim Lee, a prominent Catholic convert, ran for and won the governor’s seat in the free state of Maryland before the war was even over.

“Theodore Parker,” lithograph by Leopold Grozelier (Boston, ca. 1860). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

An astounding 79 percent of the 145 Catholic men who married in St. Mary’s County between 1767 and 1784 swore their allegiance to the free state of Maryland, donated money and supplies to the American war effort, and served in the Continental Army or the St. Mary’s County Militia. Fifty-eight percent of the men who belonged to the Jesuits’ congregation at St. Inigoes Manor in 1768 did the same, and an analysis of the lives of more than 2,000 men from St. Mary’s County who aided the independence movement reveals that more than half of them were probably Catholic, at a time when the Catholic population of St. Mary’s County was between 25 and 32 percent.

In contrast, the most generous estimates argue that just 40 to 45 percent of the white population in all thirteen colonies actively supported the independence movement—and that average includes Massachusetts and Virginia, where support for the Revolution may have been as high as 60 percent. Maryland was home to one of the largest contingents of loyalist soldiers, and Maryland’s merchants were among the last to sign onto the colonial non-importation agreement in the wake of the Stamp Act. Protestants in the colony, in other words, seem to have been ambivalent about independence; that ambivalence, however, was not shared by their Catholic neighbors.

This willingness to challenge traditional authority and to insist on a right to determine the course of some of the affairs governing their lives continued

among America's first Catholics in the decades that followed the American Revolution. In 1786, the members of New York City's first Catholic parish insisted on the right to choose their priest and determine his salary as a part of the parish's founding. Five years later, Catholics in Kentucky wanted their priest, Stephen Badin, to provide them with a constitution—an idea that Badin resisted, but one that Bishop John England proved willing to implement in South Carolina and Georgia just three years after his arrival in Charleston in 1820. In 1818, the members of one, tiny Catholic parish in Richmond, Virginia, were so dissatisfied with their indecipherable French priest that they wrote to Thomas Jefferson, pleading with him to use his political influence to pass a federal law that would require the congregational election of all pastors in the United States, regardless of denomination. Their effort failed to move Jefferson, but it testifies to the strongly republican tenor of Catholicism in early America.

Scholars who specialize in American Catholic history have traditionally pointed to what the celebrated British observer of early American culture, Harriet Martineau, called "the spirit of the time" when seeking to comprehend this fiercely republican period in the American church's development. The period was more or less over by the mid-nineteenth century, brought to an end by the combination of an influx of Irish immigrants—who tended to exhibit a more deferential or "ultramontane" approach to their church's hierarchy—and a coordinated effort on the part of America's bishops to stymie what they believed was a "scandalous insubordination toward lawful pastors" and an "evil that tends to ruin the Catholic discipline to schism and heresy."

Nevertheless, for the first few decades of the Catholic Church's development in the new United States, lay Catholics were "influenced by broader American notions of authority," according to historian Jim O'Toole. They were "accustomed to the republican idea that ordinary people such as themselves were the source of power in civil society," and they assumed, then, that that meant they were the source of at least some power within the Catholic Church, as well.

Undoubtedly, early American Catholics *were* influenced by the broader American notions of authority that animated their time. This explanation for the Catholic republicanism that characterized the early national period has many merits. The church's weak infrastructure during the early years of the republic also played a role. John Carroll, the first bishop of the United States, understood that because there were few priests in the country—and virtually no episcopal framework—the Catholic Church was dependent upon the laity for its survival. Carroll had a love-hate relationship with this dependence. As a member of the Society of Jesus, which had been disbanded by Pope Clement XIV in 1773, he felt no particular obligation to advance the Vatican's authority among Catholics in the United States. Nevertheless, Carroll was a Catholic—which meant he understood the Church and its hierarchy to be the incarnation of Christ. As such, he found some of the laity's efforts to exert control over their priests to be examples of "libertinism and irreligion," and he worked,

therefore, to increase the number of priests ministering in the United States and to create an episcopal framework for the country.


“Anthony Burns,” wood engraving by John Andrew, drawn by Charles A. Barry from a daguerreotype by Whipple & Black (Boston, 1855). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

John Carroll, in many respects, exemplifies why a narrative that points simply to the “spirit of the times” when explaining Catholic republicanism is insufficient. He was a native-born American who supported the independence movement and even traveled to Canada at one point on behalf of the Continental Congress, in an effort to convince the Catholic residents of Montreal to join the Patriots’ movement. He extolled the merits of the First Amendment in public, even though the Vatican would not formally endorse an individual right to religious liberty until 1965. Carroll promised the members of New York’s first parish that he would “extend a proper regard” to their claim that they were entitled to a voice in “the mode of the presentation and election [of pastors].” But even as he promised New York’s Catholics that he would give them this regard, he fretted that they were acting “nearly in the same manner as the Congregational Presbyterians of your neighboring New England states.”

Carroll, in other words, took the “conceptual language” of Catholicism seriously, even as he embraced America’s political culture. He had a “fundamental trust and confidence in the goodness of … human institutions,” and like all Catholics, he believed there was something a little bit dangerous (a.k.a. “Protestant”) about the radical individualism that characterized American life. Catholics’ disproportionate support for the independence movement and their republican approach to the issue of church governance obscures the reality that America’s first Catholics were not a people who challenged authority easily. This does not mean that they were the patsies their Protestant contemporaries often made them out to be; to be Catholic anywhere in the English-speaking world in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, after all, constituted a challenge to authority on some level. Catholicism, however, embraces hierarchy as something that is necessary in a fallen world, and it teaches that institutions, rightly formed, are mechanisms through which humanity can come to know God. To be Catholic, therefore, has always been to accept the goodness of boundaries that define relationships in terms of order and obligation. Why, then, were the Catholics who initiated and then oversaw America’s transformation from a collection of British colonies to an autonomous republic willing to challenge the authority of their church and their king?

The answer may have something to do with the reality that the republicanism these Catholics embraced was formulated in a slaveholding context.

When the United States was founded, most of America’s Catholics lived in

communities where slavery was the foundation of the economy and the framework onto which all social relations were built. In the eighteenth century, the Chesapeake Bay region was home to the second-largest concentration of slave labor in the burgeoning British Empire. Only the sugar colonies in the Caribbean relied on slavery more. In 1790, when the first formal census of Maryland's population was taken by the United States' government, roughly a third of the state's entire population was enslaved. The majority of these slaves belonged to "elite" planters, whom historians define as landowners whose personal estate was worth more than £650 by the mid-eighteenth century. Among these elite planters, Catholics seem to have been the ones who owned the largest number of people.

Between 1743 and 1759, the average number of slaves owned by an elite planter in Maryland was 22; in contrast, the average number of slaves owned by a Catholic—elite or clerical—during this same period was 31. Some Catholic owners had a relatively small number of slaves; Father Joseph Mosley, for instance, reported to his sister in 1766 that he had just "some Negroes" living with him on his eastern-shore farm. Other Catholics were among the largest slaveholders in the colony. Charles Carroll of Annapolis, for example, had 386 slaves living on his four western-shore estates in 1773. His father, Charles Carroll the Settler, owned 112 people at the time of his death in 1720. When Henry Darnall died in 1711, he had 100 slaves living on his estate in Prince George's County.

Map, "Maryland," engraved by William Barker, from Carey's American Pocket Atlas (Philadelphia, 1796). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Catholics owned more slaves than Protestants did, not because slavery was more attractive to them as members of the Roman Catholic faith, but because they tended to be the colony's wealthiest residents. This wealth was a consequence of the recusancy laws that had governed the lives of their Catholic ancestors in early-modern England. By the mid-seventeenth century, England's Catholics were more affluent than their Protestant countrymen, partly because the Society of Jesus had deliberately targeted gentry families when attempting to sustain Catholicism, illegally, throughout the Elizabethan period, and partly because wealthy families were the ones who could most afford to pay the recusancy fines that James I levied against anyone who failed to attend Anglican worship services during his reign.

These wealthy, English Catholics came early to Maryland, a colony that had been founded in 1634 by a Catholic nobleman. They brought their wealth with them and augmented it, then, with the tobacco harvests they were able to reap from the large tracts of land they received in exchange for the indentured servants they brought to the colony. By 1758, ten of the colony's twenty largest estates belonged to Catholics, although Maryland's governor estimated that Catholics were just seven percent of the white population.

The world that America's first Catholics lived in, therefore, was similar to the world that historian Edmund Morgan's "most ardent American republicans"—i.e., colonial Virginians—lived in. The republicanism that Catholics embraced, consequently, was not built on a foundation of individualism (or, increasingly, anti-Catholicism), the way it was for northern Protestants like Jedidiah Morse and Lyman Beecher. Catholic republicanism—like the southern, "herrenvolk" republicanism that Ed Morgan, Gene Genovese, and Lacy Ford have all identified—was a racialized republicanism, built on a foundation of ordered relationships that were defined and defended by the institution of race-based slavery.

Republican society for southerners and early-national Catholics alike was not one in which freedom and individualism ran amok, the way they did in *The Planter's Northern Bride*, an 1854 novel by Caroline Lee Hentz, whose depiction of the horrors of the industrializing North was at least as accurate as Harriet Beecher Stowe's rendering of the brutality of the slaveholding South. For Catholics and southerners, republican society , at least rhetorically, was one in which communal obligations were honored and relationships were ordered in such a way as to allow for the basic, human needs of all individuals to be met, while at the same time giving a growing number of men—*white* men—the freedom to cultivate their individual talents.

This "positive good" argument for slavery gained traction in the South in the 1820s and '30s, primarily as a defensive response to the controversy over the Missouri Compromise and the fear that Nat Turner's Rebellion provoked in 1831. Its roots, however, can be found in the earlier responses of southerners like Parson Weems and Timothy Ford to the French Revolution and the efforts of yeoman farmers in South Carolina to expand their representation in the state's legislature by not allowing low-country planters to count their slaves when determining district apportionment. Weems insisted that the *sans culottes* misunderstood "equality," since the condition, properly speaking, was a matter only of "equal dignity … in appropriate station." Ford believed, self-servingly, that slaves should be counted in the process of apportionment because slavery helped societies realize the liberal ideal. "In the country where personal freedom and the principles of equality were carried to the greatest extent ever known," he wrote in 1794, referring to ancient Sparta, "domestic slavery was the most common, and under the least restraint."

"Ch[arles] Carroll of Carrollton," lithograph by Albert Newsam after the painting by Thomas Sully, published by Childs & Inman Lithographers (Philadelphia, 1832). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

The reality of race-based slavery and the rhetoric that planters increasingly used to justify it made republicanism and individual freedom "safe" for early-American Catholics to embrace by ensuring that the bonds of hierarchy and

reciprocal obligation that were so important to the Catholic understanding of human relations remained intact. America's first Catholics did not worry that what one late-nineteenth-century priest disparagingly referred to as "the principle of private judgment" would "produce disruption in civil as well as in religious society." Early American Catholics—not just the laity, but even some clergy, like Bishop John Carroll of Baltimore and Bishop John England of Charleston—believed that they could challenge lawful authority, even to the point of waging war, and it would not lead to "exaggerated fanaticism" or "render government impossible, unless by brute force." They believed they could do this, because even as they challenged authority, America's first Catholics did so in a context that had clearly defined boundaries of prerogative and duty.

To say that slavery played a role in the making of an early-American Catholic identity is not to say that America's first Catholics were "slavish." It is also not to agree with Theodore Parker that Catholicism was or is an "irreconcilable enemy of freedom." The argument does not even require us to accept that Catholics could not have embraced the republican tenets of American identity without the mitigating influence of slavery. The Irish Catholic newspaper editor Matthew Carey, after all, became a staunch advocate of republicanism after he arrived in Philadelphia in 1784, at a time when slaves made up less than one percent of Pennsylvania's population. As Edmund Morgan wrote with regard to his fiery Virginians: "This is not to say that a belief in republican equality had to rest on slavery, but only that in Virginia (and probably other southern colonies) it did."

Matthew Carey aside, the fact is that America's first Catholics did, by and large, embrace republicanism in a slaveholding context, and we will never know if Charles Carroll, Ignatius Fenwick, or Thomas Sim Lee would have accepted the ideology at the heart of the American Revolution without the reality of race-based slavery. What we do know is that the only active, Catholic loyalists in the colonies were not from Maryland; the "Roman Catholic Volunteers" were a group of around 200 Catholics from Pennsylvania who, unlike their religious brethren to the south, did not encounter the freewheeling, individualistic qualities of republicanism in a slave-holding context.

We also know that in the years that followed the American Revolution, as non-slaveholding alternatives to lived republicanism became available to white southerners—thanks in large part to a deliberate easing of manumission laws in the Upper South—Catholics eschewed these alternatives, even as some of their Protestant neighbors chose to accept them. This Catholic unwillingness to see slavery as incompatible with individual freedom may have been a consequence of the fact that the slaveholding context in which Catholics embraced the tenets of American identity made republicanism less radical—and therefore more palatable—to a group of people whose religious worldview had clearly defined boundaries of authority and obligation.

In the seven years that followed the end of the Revolutionary War, between

7,000 and 10,000 slaves in Maryland were freed by their masters—a phenomenal spike in manumissions that scholars have pointed to as a sign that some slaveholding members of America's founding generation recognized that slavery could not be easily reconciled with the ideology of the American Revolution. Few, if any, of these manumitting masters seem to have been Catholic.

"The Most Revered John Carroll, D.D., First Archbishop of Baltimore," engraved by William Satchwell and Benjamin Tanner after the painting by J. Paul, published by Benjamin Tanner (Philadelphia, 1812). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Charles Carroll of Carrollton, Edward Fenwick (Ignatius' son), and Thomas Sim Lee did consider releasing some of their slaves from bondage—but not until well into the nineteenth century. Carroll, who died in 1832, made arrangements in his will to free one slave, Bill, out of the more than 300 people he owned. He also manumitted seven slaves in 1808 who claimed to be descended from a free white woman, Nell Butler, and were already suing for their freedom. Thomas Sim Lee manumitted one of his slaves, Nell, and all of her children in June of 1815. The woman's name suggests that she, too, may have claimed an ancestral connection to Nell Butler, as quite a few slaves in Maryland did. Edward Fenwick promised in 1825 to let his slave Michael purchase his freedom for $318. By 1830, Michael had paid Fenwick $218, and he had found a man named Gardiner who was willing to provide the remaining $100. Fenwick agreed to release Michael after he had worked for Gardiner for three years. In 1833, however, when Gardiner petitioned for Michael's release, Edward Fenwick refused.

In 1790, the Catholic strongholds of St. Mary's, Charles, and Prince George's counties had the highest free-black-to-slave ratios in all of Maryland. In Prince George's County, the ratio of free black to enslaved was 1 to 68, meaning that 99 percent of the people of African ancestry in Prince George's County were enslaved. In contrast, the heavily Calvinist Anne Arundel County had a free-black-to-enslaved ratio of 1 to 13. Planters in both counties cultivated tobacco, a very labor-intensive product. Yet, in spite of the need for labor, in Anne Arundel County, more than 7 percent of the black population enjoyed a modicum of freedom.

Much to the frustration of historians, very few manumission papers actually list the slaveholders' reasons for freeing their slaves. That being said, several records from Maryland in the 1780s and 90s—the brief period after the war that saw a spike in manumissions—do point to the belief that slavery violated "the inalienable rights of Mankind," or that a slave was entitled to the "free enjoyment of his rights and liberty." It is noteworthy, therefore, that none of the records after 1802 point to these principles when explaining a manumission. While some slaveholding Americans may have been keenly aware of the disconnect between their property and their principles in the aftermath of

the American Revolution, that awareness seems to have worn off as time marched on, and historians believe that the slave manumissions that occurred in the nineteenth century, then—that is to say, the period when Catholics tended to manumit their slaves—were motivated by other factors, such as the declining profitability of slavery in the Upper South.

None of this information requires that Catholics be condemned as a group for failing to manumit their slaves in the immediate wake of the American Revolution. The truth is that most Methodists, Anglicans, and Calvinists did not free their slaves during this period, either. But some did. And the fact that Catholics did not suggests that they may not have seen the hierarchical and authoritarian reality of slavery as inconsistent with the republican principles they embraced when they became Americans.

In this respect, then, Theodore Parker ought not to be dismissed as a religious bigot, simply because he frequently observed that he "never knew of a Catholic … who favored freedom in America." Parker probably *didn't* ever meet or read about a Catholic who embraced freedom as he—a liberal Unitarian—understood it. Freedom, for him, was something wholly and completely individual; it manifested itself most clearly in the "personal self-rule of modern times." Theodore Parker never spoke of the U.S. Constitution as an example of "well-regulated republicanism," the way Bishop John England of Charleston did; he never lauded the American system as one that embodied "the conservative principle of freedom" that respected "the spirit of the community …without such a spirit, and such precautions, no true liberty can exist." That's because Theodore Parker didn't share John England's very Catholic belief that republicanism needed to be "regulated" or reined in by anything other than individual virtue.

It is probably still true that the politicians and religious leaders who railed against Catholicism in the first half of the nineteenth century were motivated by a certain degree of status anxiety—some, perhaps, such as Lyman Beecher, more than others. But it is also true that these leaders were motivated by a real sense that the Catholic understanding of freedom was different from theirs, and they were right to see Catholics' support of the institution of slavery as the embodiment of this difference. Freedom, for Catholics, was corporate; it was born of the "reciprocal duties" that one priest from colonial Maryland insisted all people had to one another. Freedom, for Catholics, was not "personal," the way it was for Protestants like Theodore Parker.

It is no small irony, therefore, that modern-day Catholics like Bishop William Lori of Baltimore have been appealing to personal freedom in their attempt to protect the collective freedom of the Catholic Church from the mandates of a law that supporters say defines healthcare as a "requirement of a free life that the community has an obligation to provide." In 2012, on the eve of the Church's first "Fortnight for Freedom"—a now annual event that highlights "government coercions against conscience" such as the birth control provision in the Affordable Care Act—Lori made his reasons for opposing the healthcare overhaul clear: "If we fail to defend the rights of individuals," he warned,

“the freedom of institutions will be at risk.”

It was an assertion that—could he have heard it—might have confounded Mr. Parker, or at the very least given him pause.

Further Reading:

For more on the differences between a Catholic and a Protestant mindset—and the challenges, then, that those differences posed for Catholic assimilation into American culture—see: Jay Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism: A History of Religion and Culture in Tension* (New York, 2002); Mark S. Massa, *Anti-Catholicism in America: The Last Acceptable Prejudice* (New York, 2003); John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom* (New York, 2003); and James M. O’Toole, *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America* (Cambridge, Mass., 2008).

For more on traditionalist Catholic claims to religious liberty and the recent “Fortnight for Freedom” movement sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops see: Michael Novak,“The Return of the Catholic Whig,” *First Things*, March 1990; George Weigel, “‘Fortnight for Freedom’: U.S. Catholics and Religious Liberty: The Origins,” *First Things*, June 20, 2012; Melinda Henneberger, “Is the Catholic ‘Fortnight for Freedom’ really a ‘Fortnight to Defeat Barak Obama?’” op-ed, *Washington Post*, June 7, 2012; Rich Daly, “What the 112th Congress Faces,”*National Catholic Register*, January 21, 2011.

Theodore Parker’s comments about the link between Catholicism and slavery can be found in his essay “The Rights of Man in America” (1854) in *The Rights of Man in America*, F.B. Sanborn, ed. (Boston, 1911). Bishop John England’s interpretation of *In Supremo Apostolatus* can be found in his letter to Secretary of State John Forsyth, September 29, 1840, in *Letters of the Late Bishop England to the Hon. John Forsyth*, rpt. (Independence, Ky., 2012).

This article originally appeared in issue 15.3 (Spring, 2015).

Maura Jane Farrelly is associate professor of American Studies at Brandeis University, where she directs the Journalism Program. Before joining Brandeis, she worked as a full-time reporter in Atlanta, Washington, D.C., and New York. Farrelly is the author of *Papist Patriots: The Making of an American Catholic Identity* (2012).

A Reflection on the Nat Fuller Feast, April 19th, 2015

The descendant of Nat Fuller’s mentor reflects on the 2015 Feast.

A Man, A Family, A Discussion: Using Copley’s Art in the Classroom

Students can see how the virtue and nurturing nature of women is clearly reflected in the mother’s face and through the calm manner she exhibits as not one but two children demand her attention.

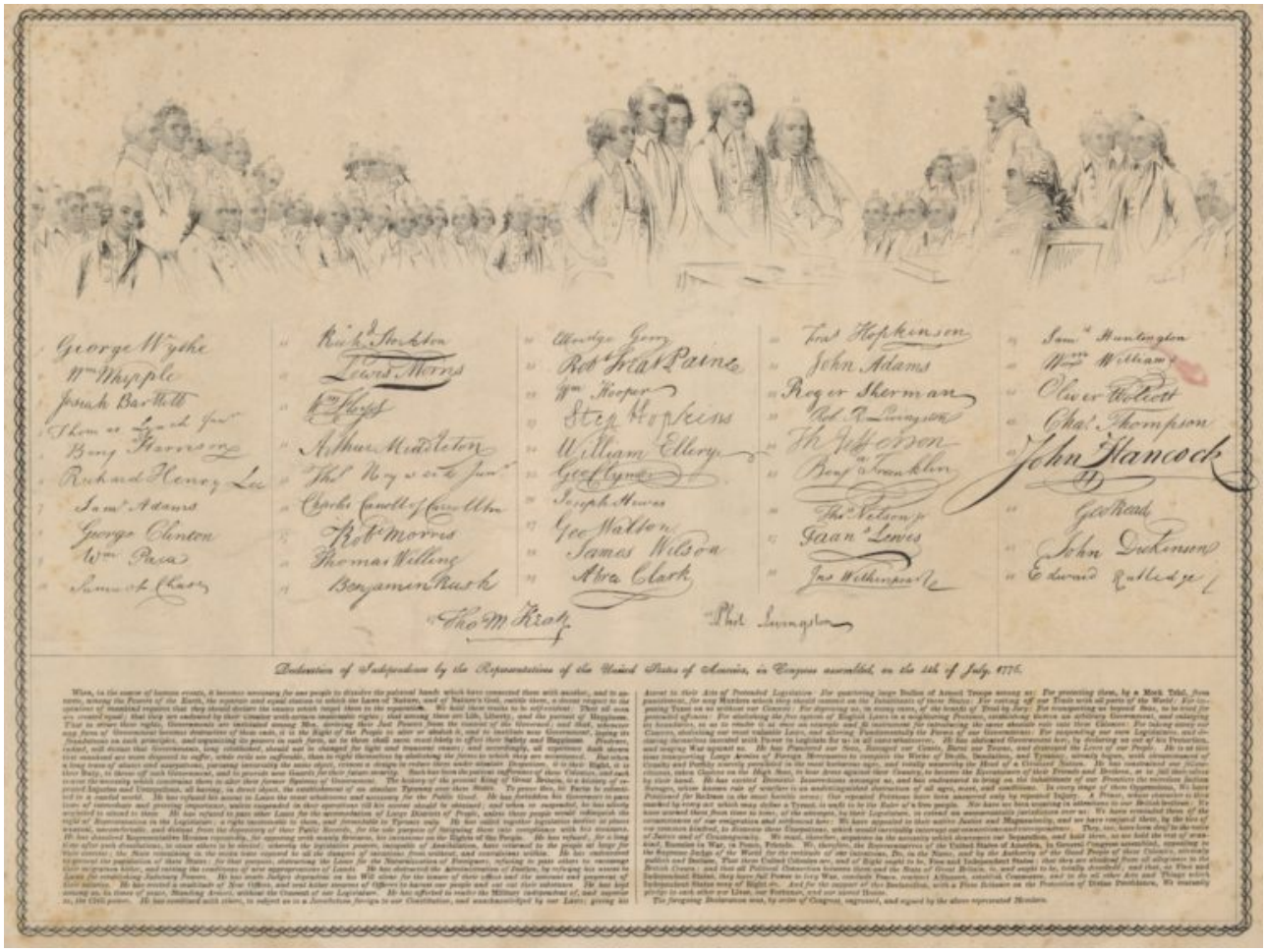
The Big Picture

The Greeks were the cradle of the West. No others need apply.

Introduction to *The History of a French Louse*

The satire’s narrator is a louse who has lived on a series of heads in and around Paris and been witness to the political maneuverings happening behind the scenes of the American Revolution.

Fomenting a Rebellion



As one of my Clemente students once said in class: “Slavery was America’s original sin, but we’re all still paying for it.”

Divine Dimes: My Adventures Down the Rabbit Hole of Religious Pulp Literature

The lines between high and low culture were blurry in nineteenth-century America. Dime novels lacked critical acclaim, yet famous authors like Samuel Clemens readily drew from dime novel conventions.

Who Reads an Early American Book?

Presented as part of the Special Literature Issue

Can early American books regain such a readership in the twenty-first century?

Reading with Wonder: Encounters with Moby-Dick

We are at sea even before the Pequod’s voyage begins.