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"THEIR SHOES YET NEW": THE IMMIGRANT IMAGE IN THE BALTIMORE RIOTS OF 1812 AND THE DISAGREEMENT OVER NATIONALITY

An Honors Thesis Submitted To
The Faculty of The Department of History
Written Under the Direction of Dr. John Gordon

By

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Abstract

This paper examines the ways in which immigrants were characterized in Baltimore immediately following that city's Riots in 1812. It finds that the "native" majority used the immigrant image in an attempt to determine the criteria of nationality. That image was not settled, however, and rather constituted a discussion between interested groups about the relative importance of ethnicity in the years before Jacksonian democracy. It also concludes that the peculiar conditions and social divisions of Baltimore directly contributed to the Baltimore Riots and that the riots provided an opportunity for prevalent stereotypes to surface.

I pledge that I have neither given nor received any unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work.
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Introduction

The period between 1776 and 1820 is largely passed over in immigrant studies. Typically, these earlier starting dates are discarded for the more convenient years after 1820. By this time, the Napoleonic Wars had ended, as had America’s confrontation with Britain, and great waves of immigrants began to flood American shores. Additionally, immigration data is much more systematic and complete for after 1820. For certain studies of immigration, this later starting date is appropriate. Yet, for works on images of immigrants, and more particularly the stereotypes they faced, beginning in 1820 may be too late. Although instances of stereotyping were much more prevalent after 1820, which many scholars have correctly attributed to a backlash against the surge in immigration in those years, the stereotypes themselves were created much earlier. Anti-immigrant feeling was merely brought to the surface by the prodigious amounts of immigration after 1820. Prior to 1820, particularly in times of crisis, the beginnings of anti-immigrant feeling and the responses to it can be found.

One such crisis was the Baltimore Riots of 1812. Many scholars, Paul A. Gilje in particular, have argued that the Baltimore Riots of 1812 signaled a departure from eighteenth-century riot forms which were only limitedly violent, focused primarily on the destruction of property, and were based on feelings of community solidarity that crossed other social boundaries. The Baltimore Riots in June of 1812, which involved the tearing down of the office of the Federal Republican newspaper, exemplified this first type of rioting. The second major riot, in July, was of a different stripe, however. It was considered the most violent riot in the United States to that date, was focused on physical

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violence, and was based on social cleavages. Gilje argues that this riot was earliest of the riots which characterized the Jacksonian era and the social fissures inherent in that period. During the Jacksonian period of egalitarianism, people ceased to identify with each other outside of political, racial, ethnic and economic categories. The community solidarity which once bound together disparate groups no longer held, and people created new associations based on these other factors.²

Baltimore uniquely represented the new democratic feeling of the country. In a sense, Baltimore was a Jacksonian Democracy before there was an Andrew Jackson. Baltimore was quite different from its other large counterparts such as New York, Philadelphia, or Boston. An established colonial aristocracy was nowhere to be found, and many of the city leaders, such as Mayor Edward Johnson, would be more correctly placed in the middle class. Baltimore was also a city in which social conflict had already been brewing beneath the surface. The city was already divided along class, racial, and ethnic lines. Even one’s neighborhood was a matter of division.³ This, combined with a growing sense that power resided with the individual, and an aversion to state control, or the control of one’s “social and intellectual betters,” created the perfect atmosphere for a riot.⁴


According to Gilje, a riot or a mob is when the lower classes – the *menu peuple* – make themselves heard.\(^5\) Yet, the scope of this study is more limited. It focuses less on what the riot *itself* said and more on what the riot *caused* people to say. This distinction is of the greatest importance. The riot will be examined not as a form of discourse but as a catalyst for discussion. Here, Dale T. Knobel warns that “Under certain circumstances (particularly in mobs), people do what they may not feel and feel what they dare not do.”\(^6\) This warning as it is presented concerns this study little because who did or did not participate in the riot and for what reasons is of only secondary importance.

Yet, as a corollary, if the word “say” is merely inserted for “do,” this warning may be applied to speech as well, which then must be addressed. Surely, a prudent historian cannot assume that all those who blamed the riots on immigrants in print or used stereotypes against them were immune to the passions of that terrible moment and meant every word they said. What can be assumed, however, is that those who wrote about the immigrants used images that were readily accessible and, most likely, prevalent at the time. As for “feeling what they dare not” say, many pro-immigrant and anti-immigrant views were surely never stated. The opportunity to respond was especially limited for the immigrant lower-classes (the subject of vilification) themselves. Nonetheless, this is a problem for all historical inquiries – sources must be dealt with in the form they are given.

Still, this riot is of value because it provided an instance in which discussion of membership in the young nation was at the forefront. Both Federalists and Republicans


attempted to denounce their adversaries by claiming they were not “true Americans.”\(^7\)

While Republicans depended primarily on political differences, the Federalists had another weapon at their disposal, ethnicity. The importance of a riot is that it is a crisis, and a very public one at that. It brings to the surface discussions which may have previously occurred only in parlors between friends and places them in a very public setting. Furthermore, the riot took place immediately after a declaration of war. War is when the stakes of the decision of who is a member of the nation are the highest.

Federalists and Republicans both viewed each other as false Americans largely on the basis of their support for or opposition to the war. Ethnicity became a major factor in this discussion because Federalists believed, or at least espoused, that their nation was being led astray by foreigners with no legitimate stake in the nation.

This paper takes at its root a definition of ethnicity that is as much prescriptive as it is descriptive. Ethnicity, of course, has basic roots in culture, language, and genealogy, but it is also a set of ascribed categories set by those who are “in” to describe those who are “out.”\(^8\) Ethnicity is an ever-changing identity that plays a role in determining another changing identity – nationality. Some argue that ethnicity was comparatively unimportant as a criterion for nationality prior to the Civil War, though Americans may have been ready for it to gain importance in the 1830s-40s. Still others argue that ethnicity may have been more important than historians have assumed, and that it began to play a role as early as the 1820s.\(^9\) This paper will show that ethnic identity was a matter of contention even in 1812, though perhaps below the surface. “Native”

\(^7\) Interesting Papers Relative to the Recent Riots at Baltimore (Philadelphia: 1812), 64-66, 76, 81-82; Federal Republican (Georgetown, DC), July 29, 1812.
\(^8\) For an excellent discussion of ethnicity as a prescriptive concept, see Knobel, xi.
\(^9\) Knobel, 7-8.
Americans\textsuperscript{10} had already begun to define themselves negatively, that is according to who they were not, by excluding other ethnic minorities from comprehensive nationality.

That is not to say that ethnicity was determined for immigrant populations without any input of their own. Far from it, ethnicity was a discussion between immigrants and non-immigrants over the qualifications of nationality. In the peculiar instance of the Baltimore Riots, the discussion tended to divide along party lines because immigrants joined the Republican Party almost exclusively. They associated the Republican Party with greater individual freedom, something many of them had only just acquired after leaving more oppressive native lands.\textsuperscript{11} Federalists, by and large, saw immigrants as not fitting the definition of “American.” If immigrants were “foreign-born Americans,” the Federalists perceived them as “foreign-born” first and “American” second. According to this criterion, Americanism was almost entirely a product of birth. Yet, this did not hold true in all cases; the definition of nationality was still in the works and ethnicity would not come close to being a proscriptive factor until later in the nineteenth century.

Republicans, in solidarity with their immigrant compatriots, believed that place of birth, or heritage, was not as important as the Federalists claimed. For them, Americans could typically be made as well as born. Political character in particular could trump ethnicity. In Baltimore in 1812, it was almost as important to be a good “Republican” as to be a good “American.” Sometimes, it was more important and often the two were synonymous. Stereotypes were strong, however, and ethnicity, although not a

\textsuperscript{10} In the term Native American, I am using the nomenclature of the period to mean those born in the United States, typically of English origin, not the aboriginal people of the United States as it does today. 
proscriptive factor, was still a mitigating circumstance.\textsuperscript{12} Thus, although Republicans viewed immigrants as “Americans” first, they were still “foreign-born.” Neither the Federalists nor the Republicans seemed willing to grant immigrants full national status at a time when nationality was of vital importance, and was one of the few ties that still bound a volatile city together.

But what of the immigrants themselves? Understandably, sources written by immigrants are comparatively few in number and are typically more incidental. Yet, what source material is available implies that immigrants were also in the process of discussing the criteria of nationality. First, in writings meant to refute charges of their “un-Americanism,” or simply written to those within the bounds of nationality, they make claims for inclusion in the nation. Usually, those arguments hinge on political solidarity or assimilation. In sources written among them, however, one may see a different side. Immigrants, it appears, may have internalized many of the stereotypes about themselves. By internalization, I take it to mean that immigrants used the same language the majority used to set them apart in conversations amongst themselves. It is important to note the difference in source material between these two types of discussion. In the first instance, immigrants are writing to those in the majority so their arguments for inclusion are likely to be more overt. Meanwhile, the instances of internalization are more likely to be incidental, slips of the tongue of a sort, in which they use the language of exclusion in reference to themselves.

The purpose of this study is to show that the definition of nationality in antebellum America, in this case as applied to immigrants, was not simply a product of the waves of immigration after 1820 but rather had extensive roots in the early republic.\textsuperscript{12} Knobel, 5.
It will use as its lens the riots that took place in the summer of 1812 in Baltimore, just days after the declaration of war against Great Britain. It will show that Baltimore, though politically unified, was splintered by the deepening social divisions inherent in Jacksonian democracy. Further, it will demonstrate that the riots were a direct outgrowth of these social divisions and a product of the unique character of Baltimore at the time. Next, it will contend that the riots provided an opportune time for prevalent stereotypes about immigrants to come to the surface. It will also describe those stereotypes and demonstrate that they were attempts by the majority to define what it meant to be American. That the immigrant image was always in flux, and was a discussion between groups over what were the most important criteria of nationality, will also be evident. Lastly, the paper will argue that, although immigrants attempted to carve out a place for themselves as Americans, they often internalized the very stereotypes that excluded them. In the final analysis, it is clear that the bitter attacks on immigrants by the Know-Nothing Party of the 1850s are rooted in the disagreements on nationality during the early republic. Those disagreements were brought to the surface by the Baltimore Riots of 1812.

Baltimore as Boomtown

Baltimore in 1812 was something of a time-bomb, a city ripe for riot. The newest of America’s “big cities,” it was incorporated only in 1799. It had experienced unprecedented growth, rising from a small town of less than 5,000 in 1776 to the third largest city in the nation by 1812.13 It surpassed the colonial port city of Boston and

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lagged behind only the huge metropolises of New York and Philadelphia. Many elite Baltimoreans considered their city the “Rome of the United States.” Seeing its potential as a cultural and economic center of the young nation, they frankly expected it to lead the nation after the War of 1812.\textsuperscript{14} The booming economic life of Baltimore could be attributed in large part to its position. The city was the western most port on the eastern seaboard which made it a natural commercial center, dealing in the agricultural products of the West and, to a lesser extent, the South. In 1810, the ratio of tons of shipping to inhabitants of Baltimore was the third highest in the nation, following only Boston and Portsmouth, New Hampshire.\textsuperscript{15} It was also no accident that in 1828, the first railroad began in Baltimore and ran to the Ohio River.\textsuperscript{16}

Not incorporated until after the Revolution, the city lacked the established colonial social order that bound peer cities like Philadelphia or Boston. Most of Baltimore’s inhabitants were immigrants from Europe, from the counties of Maryland, or from other states. The traditional “aristocracies” of cities like Boston and Philadelphia were nowhere to be found. This is not to say there was not an elite in Baltimore, but the wealthy landowners and Maryland’s first families tended to live in the plantation counties of the Potomac region. Those in Baltimore who could count themselves as rich tended to be men who began with little and worked their way toward wealth. That wealth was new, however, and the lower classes and their political fortune posed a constant threat to the wealthy’s economic prosperity. Nipping at the heels of the affluent was the immense

\textsuperscript{14} Marshall W. Fishwick, “The Portico and Literary Nationalism After the War of 1812,” \textit{The William and Mary Quarterly}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} Series 8 (1951): 239


\textsuperscript{16} Fishwick, 239.
middle class. It saw itself in the rich (even if the reverse was not the case) and was unwilling to allow those of similar background and relatively new means to dominate city politics and society. Below the rich and the middle class seethed a large class of day laborers, sailors, new immigrants and free blacks who gravitated toward the fringes of the city and often competed for the same jobs.\

Another characteristic of the social divisions in Baltimore was the competition between neighborhoods or wards. The wards in early Baltimore provided a sense of community in an otherwise divided city. Wards formed dusk to dawn street patrols to combat crime, and the Baltimore Jennarian Society, formed in 1812 to combat the spread of disease, was organized into ward committees. But, among wards, conflict often occurred between the lower classes that lived in Fells Point, Old Town, and Federal Hill, which were on the fringes of the city, and the merchant elites living in wards three and four, which were closer to the inner harbor. The conflict dated back to the very incorporation of the city. Fells Point had resisted incorporation into Baltimore. Prior to the City’s incorporation, Fells Point had been the primary location for the shipping industry because the Inner Harbor was a basin that would frequently become shallow. Because of its shipping industry, the Point was home to sailors, mechanics, and dockworkers – the lower strata of Baltimore society. These jobs were usually occupied by heavy populations of immigrants and free blacks, and land on the fringe of the city was relatively cheap for renters.

The large free black population added a special twist to Baltimore’s pre-Jacksonian time-bomb. In 1800, 10.4% of Baltimore’s population was free blacks, as

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17 Cassell, 241-2.
18 LeFurgy, 147-8.
opposed to only 5.3% in the rest of the state. The number of free blacks was a little larger than Philadelphia, and about twice that of New York and Boston.\textsuperscript{19} They also competed with Baltimore’s large immigrant population for unskilled or semi-skilled jobs and violent conflicts between blacks and immigrants became common through the 1830s and 40s.\textsuperscript{20} Also contributing to Baltimore’s rough image (and, arguably, its reality) was the disproportionate population of males. As of 1800, the population of white males aged 16-25 was twelve percent in the city, roughly twice the proportion of the rest of the state. This discrepancy was far higher than in Boston, Philadelphia and New York.\textsuperscript{21}

By 1812, the ties that managed to bind the colonial-rooted cities of America were beginning to fray in Baltimore. One major reason for this was the political culture of the city. Baltimore, since about 1788, had appeared an “unconquerable bastion of united Republican strength.”\textsuperscript{22} It had joined the Republican party almost to a man. The city was comparatively heterogeneous, highly populated with immigrants, and had a small slave population, all of which added to Republican tendencies. Beneath the surface, however, there were deep conflicts within the Republican Party. Interests in Baltimore were strongly divided. The post-revolutionary elite merchant class came into conflict with the lower classes. The most accessible example was the conflict between the merchant elites and the wage workers over the proposal of universal white manhood suffrage in Maryland, which eventually passed in 1802.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{20} Gilje, “Le Menu Peuple,” 63.
\textsuperscript{21} Shammas, 531.
\textsuperscript{22} Wheeler, 153.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid.}, 158-63; Cassell, 242-243.
Yet, the Baltimore Republicans were opposed to the Federalist aristocrats of the Potomac region. When the Federalists challenged Republican hegemony in Baltimore or in the state government, the political coalition was once again strong. For one thing, the two parties had different interests in a physical sense. The Federalists despised that the Republican majority of immoral Baltimore controlled Maryland politics, while the Republicans still seethed at recollections of early Federalist attempts to change the selection of electors. 24 In the years leading up to 1812, the Republicans in Baltimore strongly supported war against Britain. British impressments of sailors under the Orders in Council, they felt, could be disastrous to the future of a primarily commercial port city like Baltimore. Baltimoreans also had more historic political differences. It had been the Federalist John Jay who had negotiated Jay's Treaty in 1794 which placed what Republicans saw as humiliating restrictions on American sovereignty and, in particular, on trade. Also, with large populations of immigrants from France, "Germany," the French West Indies, and Ireland, the Alien and Sedition Acts still left a bitter taste in the mouths of Baltimore Republicans. Thus, although the Republican Party was not as unified as it appeared on the surface, and possessed many internal fissures, none of the factions could accept Federalism. 25 As a result, the inflammatory writings of the arch-Federalist Alexander Contee Hanson, and his coeditor Jacob Wagner, took the bomb that was Republican Baltimore and lit the fuse. When the United States declared war on Britain on June 18, 1812, the third largest city in the new nation was prepared to explode.

Baltimore as Mobtown

24 Cassell, 242.
25 Wheeler, 153-68; Bohmer, 79.
The first Baltimore riot of 1812 was not altogether unusual as riots went. On June 22, a cadre of about thirty or forty men set about dismantling the Gay Street printing office of the Federal Republican newspaper. The paper, published by co-editors Jacob Wagner and Alexander Contee Hanson, was the most vilified Federalist publication in a city that was almost entirely Republican. The paper had been publishing anti-Republican rhetoric, directed at a small Baltimore minority and a Federalist majority throughout the rest of the state for years; many Baltimore residents had discussed finding some way to silence the paper. In fact, a reward had even been issued to anyone who could tar and feather Hanson. On June 20, 1812, war was declared against England. Two days later a new issue of the Federal Republican was printed decrying the motives of the Madison administration. The following day meetings were held in the rough neighborhood of Fells Point to discuss the use of violence against the newspaper’s office and its editors.

The men went about dismantling the office quite matter of factly, “as if they contracted to perform the job for pay.” As they were tearing down the walls, they were confronted by the mayor, Edward Johnson, a brewer who had been a lieutenant to Republican political boss Samuel Smith, a United States Senator from Maryland. When the mayor approached one of the leaders of the mob, Dr. Phillip Lewis, an apothecary from Old Town, he was told, “I know you very well, no body wants to hurt you; but the

27 Estimates of the number of men involved vary.
28 Hickey, 4; Cassell, 244.
laws of the land must sleep, and the laws of nature and reason must prevail." At this point, the mayor and his entourage returned home. The mob then combed the city searching for Jacob Wagner to exact revenge for an accidental death during the office's destruction. Wagner was being hidden by friends and was later smuggled out of town to Georgetown, but the mob scoured his house and the house where his family was staying in the hopes of discovering him.

If this were all that happened that summer of 1812, there would be little reason to even recount what occurred. The rioters primarily attacked Wagner's property and, if they had caught him, humiliation at the hands of the mob would have been a more likely punishment than serious violence. Riots such as the one at the Gay Street office were fairly typical of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century riots. Paul Gilje has suggested that the riot conformed to an expression of community solidarity which was a hallmark of rioting in Early America as well as in Europe. Lewis knew Mayor Johnson, identified with him as a political and social ally, and Johnson responded with an implicit acquiescence to his point of view.

Yet, the activities of June 22-23 were only the beginning. In the following weeks the mob ruled Baltimore. The violence which followed was nearly a descent into anarchy. The mob pulled down two houses owned by a free black, James Briscoe, who was rumored to have said that "if all the blacks were of his opinion, they would soon put down the whites." More racial violence occurred as well as ethnic attacks. Irish Protestants and Catholics, spurred on by war fever, were openly fighting in the street.

31 Hickey, 4.
32 Ibid., 4-5
33 Cassell, 245.
35 Gilje, Rioting in America, 61.
Lastly, ships bound for the Iberian Peninsula and the Spanish West Indies were dismantled by the mob who thought the goods would support the Spanish, the Portuguese and, by extension, their English allies.36

The violence came to a head on the evening of July 27, 1812. The coeditor of the *Federal Republican*, Alexander Contee Hanson, had been planning since the destruction of the printing office to republish the incendiary newspaper in Baltimore. Aware of the outrage this would cause, Hanson assembled a group of roughly thirty men at No. 45 South Charles Street to protect the “freedom of the press.” Among the young notables, many of whom came from some of Maryland’s most prestigious families, was Revolutionary War hero General “Light-Horse Harry” Lee of Virginia and Revolutionary War veteran General James Macubin Lingan of Montgomery County. Yet, they could not secure a printing press for their exploits so the paper was actually printed in Georgetown. Listed as the location, however, was the house on South Charles Street, which the Federalists had converted into a garrison.37

By most accounts, at about eight o’clock on the evening of the twenty-seventh, a group of boys had gathered across the street from the house and began throwing stones and shouting insults. One man who tried to stop the boys had his foot mangled by a stone dropped from the second floor of the house. This enraged the crowd (which may have at that time been primarily bystanders) and the assault on the house increased. About an hour later the situation was getting difficult for the armed band – all the first floor windows were shattered, the interior shutters in shambles, and the mob snatched away

37 Cassell, 245-47; “An exact and authentic narrative, of the events which took place in Baltimore, on the 27th and 28th of July last. Carefully collected from some of the sufferers and eyewitnesses. To which is added a narrative of Mr. John Thomson, one of the unfortunate sufferers, ...” (Baltimore: 1812), 4-7.
Harry Nelson’s musket and hit him with stones. At this point Hanson addressed the crowd from his second floor window, telling it that his contingent was armed and would defend itself. The sight of Hanson and his “friendly communication” did little to stop the mob and rather infuriated them further. Hanson then ordered his men to fire blank rounds at the crowd to scare them off, yet the crowd became more aggressive, knocked down the front door, and poured into the hallway. Most of those defending the house, Hanson included, were quite eager to repel the mob with their muskets, but General Lee ordered them to hold fire. Preparing for the mob to enter the house, General Lee stationed some of the men on the stairs across from the door. 38

To this point, no intervention of the civil or military authorities had occurred except for the efforts of Judge John Scott, the chief justice of Baltimore’s criminal court and a long time Republican loyalist and beneficiary of party patronage, who was rebuffed by the mob and forced to leave the street. Next, a portion of the mob, with a Dr. Gale at their head, entered the front door of the house and was fired upon by the Federalist defenders. 39 Dr. Gale was killed and several others wounded. The mob retreated and carried with it Gale’s body but, contrary to the Federalists’ intentions, the sight of Gale’s blood only further riled the mob. According to one account, men in the street tore open their shirts and dared the defenders to “fire again!” 40

Down the street, at 15 South Charles Street, many persons had visited the home of Brigadier General John Stricker asking him to use his command of the Baltimore Brigade of the Maryland militia to intervene in the riot. Although he had close to five-thousand

39 There is some discrepancy as to the first name of Dr. Gale. Some of the witness accounts list it as “Thadeus” while some secondhand accounts, such as Gilje’s, call him “Thomas.”
40 Cassell, 248-49; “An exact and authentic,” 9
men under his command, and was known as an able military commander, he was also a staunch Republican who owed his command and a federal appointment to his political views.\textsuperscript{41} He decided to wait until he received the required signatures of two magistrates before he acted (no small task in Republican-dominated and mob-ruled Baltimore).

Around midnight Stricker obtained the signatures, but he chose to send only one squadron of cavalry, under the command of Major William B. Barney, with the unenviable task of facing a mob of three to five hundred men and thirty armed men garrisoned in a house. Barney was also a picture of procrastination as by two in the morning he had assembled only a third of the ninety men under his command.\textsuperscript{42}

By the time Barney arrived at 45 South Charles Street, the situation had gone from bad to worse. Some of the mob had acquired arms and one of the defenders who had attempted to escape was nearly hanged. Barney brought his men to within a short distance from the house and he pled with his “friends and fellow citizens” on the basis of common political ideology. Reportedly he told them that he would not be there save his orders from his superiors and that he would take into custody every man in the house. He then entered the house, but his entreaties to surrender were refused. As he was preparing to go for further instructions from General Stricker, the mob rolled up a field piece which they had stolen from a local armory and pointed it at the house. Major Barney, nervous at the sight of the canon and a mob ill-trained to operate it without killing themselves or his men, mounted the field piece and told the mob that he would occupy the house with his troops if they would agree to leave. The mob agreed. The defenders, staring down a mob with a cannon, had little choice but to follow suit. But, the mob did not leave as

\textsuperscript{41} Stricker had served in the campaign against the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794, and would lead his men against the British forces at the Battle of North Point in 1814, thereby saving the city from invasion.  
\textsuperscript{42} Cassell, 249-50.
promised and Major Barney was at a loss for how to remove the defenders from the house. 43

Early on the morning of the July 28, Mayor Johnson finally arrived in the company of General Stricker and other Baltimore Republican notables. Johnson and Stricker attempted to convince the garrison to give up the house and accompany them to the jail for safety. They argued that the mob could take the house at any moment. Hanson strenuously refused the offer deciding he would rather fight. Hanson and General Lee seemed to have offered to surrender if General Stricker’s militia would disperse the mob. Eventually, the defenders, realizing the precariousness of their position, agreed to be escorted to the jail. They requested carriages, but the mob refused saying that carts would suffice. It was eventually agreed that the militia on hand would form a hollow square around the defenders and march them to the jail a mile away. As some of the Federalists tried to escape the house at this point, many were captured and would have been hanged by the mob but for the intervention of their friends. 44

As they were marched to the jail, the mob taunted them and hurled stones at them. Several of the Federalists were hurt. Had the mob decided then to attack, the militia surely could not have protected them, nor were they likely to have tried. The mob, however, allowed the group to reach the jail. Soon after they were placed in the jail, the mob began to disperse and the militia did as well. Nonetheless, the jailer refused to release them and sent for Judge Scott who refused bail. During the day, a number of visitors came to see the Federalist defenders. Friends told them of rumors that the jail would be attacked during the night. Two butchers named Mumma and Maxwell entered

43 Ibid., 250-51; “An exact and authentic,” 10-12.
44 Cassell, 251-52; “An exact and authentic,” 12-17
the cell and studied the faces of the men and asked them their names. When prisoners
protested to the jailer and requested that the door to the cell be locked and the key handed
through the door to them, he refused.\textsuperscript{45}

General Stricker who, with the Mayor, had promised a guard to the prisoners,
called out a selected group of regiments numbering about one thousand men. All the
commanders of the regiments, with the exception of Major Barney, were Federalists;
Stricker felt it would be better to have any mishaps blamed on Federalist officers. Only
about forty infantrymen and about six cavalrymen reported. Many of the Republicans
were unwilling to show up to protect those they saw as traitors. Only a group of artillery
men arrived with any strength, but Stricker had ordered that no one be issued live
ammunition, and the artillery men were of little use without the support of infantry
against a mob that had been threatening and haranguing them all day. The artillery men
were sent home and the jail was left unprotected.\textsuperscript{46}

That night the mob returned. The mayor attempted to persuade them to leave, but
to no avail. The outer door of the jail was opened by the jailer and the mob set to work
smashing the internal wooden doors. The mob had difficulty finding the correct cell.
They started to break down the door of the cell in which one of the defenders, Otho
Sprigg, had managed to sneak while the jailer was completing rounds of the cells. He
had disguised himself, however, and his identity was protected by one of his fellow
inmates who happened to be a French immigrant. One of the Federalists in the main cell,

\textsuperscript{45} Cassell, 252-53; “An exact and authentic,” 17-22.
\textsuperscript{46} Cassell, 253-54; “An exact and authentic,” 19-20, 23.
John Thompson, called the mob away from Spriggs’s cell to his own. The door to the Federalist’s cell was then easily opened, probably with the key Mumma held earlier.47

Having only a few pistols and knives between them, the prisoners had earlier decided that fighting their way out would have been hopeless and only would have riled the mob. Thus, when the door was opened, John Thompson and Captain Daniel Murray, the two strongest among them, rushed into the crowd and attempted to extinguish all the torches so their fellows could escape in the commotion. Some of the Federalists escaped unhurt; most did not. Soon Mumma’s purpose in the jail would become clear; as Thompson crossed the threshold of jail, he was struck from behind and fell down the stairs. Mumma had been studying the faces of the prisoners so that he could mark them later. A group of men then proceeded to beat Thompson with clubs until nearly unconscious. Thompson spotted a Republican man he knew and begged for his assistance, but the man could not convince his captors to release him. They then tarred and feathered him and hauled him off in a cart all the while insulting him, beating him, and cutting him with rusty swords. The rioters then took him to the Bull’s Head Tavern in Fells Point. Told his life would be spared if he would name all his fellow prisoners, he agreed and was then taken to a police station and given medical care.48

The other Federalists did not fare much better. One, John Hall, was clubbed senseless and was only saved from more serious injury because he was believed dead. He was cast upon a pile of bodies, and those of General Lee and Hanson were thrown across him. The prisoners were beaten with clubs, penknives were stabbed into their faces and hands, and hot candle grease poured into their eyes. General Lingan, an old

Revolutionary War veteran, plead with the attackers. He reminded them that he had fought for their liberties in the Revolutionary War to which they responded "the damned old rascal is hardest dying of all of them." He was then killed on his knees to cries of "Tory." There seems to have been some debate among the rioters as to what to do with the bodies. Ideas ranged from hanging and dissection, to castration, to throwing them in the nearby Jones Falls River.

After the mob had ceased attacking the Federalists, the Republican doctor of the jail, Richard Hall, intervened. In order to prevent further violence, he told the mob that most of the Federalists were dead and the rest would soon die of their wounds. The sentiment was strongly in favor of throwing the bodies into the Jones Falls when it was suggested that Dr. Hall often needed bodies to dissect and the prisoners were given over to him. Some of the rioters even helped him haul the bodies back into the jail. Dr. Hall called doctors from all over the city when the mob had left and the jail became a hospital. He took General Lee, the most seriously wounded, to the city hospital. The rest were assisted out of town by friends. Lee was later described as "black as a negro, his head cut to pieces ..." as well as apparently missing an eye and covered in blood. Thompson was equally as bad. Although many of the Federalists sustained serious wounds and nearly died, only the aged General Lingan did not survive the ordeal.

Stereotypes

After the riot, many felt that Hanson's use of independent force to restore the paper may have been at least partly to blame for instigating the mob. Many Federalists

51 Cassell, 257; "An exact and authentic," 30-34.
had even found Hanson's writing inflammatory and were not altogether unhappy to see him silenced. In a pamphlet to the voters of his district Hanson attempted to explain his motives. In so doing he made a comment, which became quite popular, about the riots. He wrote that the idea that one should have to give up one's rights for threat of illegal force was a belief that was "abhorrent ... and which can take root and flourish no where, save the city of Baltimore." An article from Hanson's paper reiterated the point that "it is only rank foils that breed monsters." In Federalist discourse, Baltimore was a place apart, unlike the other cities of its day and especially the aristocratic regions on the Potomac.

One of the things that made Baltimore so different in the minds of the Federalists was its Jacksonian character. As has already been shown, Baltimore in many ways exemplified what would become the Jacksonian principles of egalitarianism, heterogeneity, and social distinctions based on affinities like race, class, and ethnicity. Yet, what is more important here is the perception that Baltimore characterized those principles. One thing that made Baltimore different, particularly from the more patrician lands on the Potomac, was the large immigrant presence. Regardless of the reality of Baltimore life, the Federalists who defended the house at 45 South Charles Street and those who wrote of it later, saw Baltimore as a place of ill-repute that was seething with lower class, immoral, convict laden, hordes of outcasts from all parts of Europe. These immigrants, they believed were responsible for the riots, for the war and, very likely, many of the other political and social ills of contemporary American life. For many,

52 Letter from Jacob Wagner to Alexander Contee Hanson, *Interesting Papers*, 9-10.
53 Alexander C. Hanson, "To the voters of the congressional District composed of Montgomery and Part of Frederick" (Baltimore: 1812), 3.
54 *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis), September 3, 1812, reprint of article from *Federal Republican.*
immigrants were by definition not members of the republic. For others they were just not full members. But, for all, immigrants were suspect and accusing someone of being an immigrant was a powerful stereotype which called into question their actions, their morality, and perhaps most importantly, their politics.

In *Paris and London in the Eighteenth Century: Studies in Popular Protest*, George Rudé, one of the foremost historians of mobs, discusses many of the themes that existed in discourse about rioters. Perhaps the most common theme is that of "chauvinism," which he defines as "hostility to foreigners." The accusation of foreigner was apparently used to extremely detrimental effect in almost all cases of riots, as well as in non-violent circumstances, such as elections, where foreign birth (or even simply heritage) would often be used to discredit candidates. In America, as well, epithets of "foreigner" were quite common in the press directly after the riots of June and July. Obviously intended as an insult, it was typically used to impeach the "Americanism" of the mob. It was an early example of a trend that Dale T. Knobel argues operated between 1820 and 1860. During this time the ethnic requirements of the republic hardened and eventually Americans could only be born, not made. Federalists used the foreigner insult to their full advantage to attack the Americanism of the mob and of Republicans. Yet, even the term foreigner was used to imply different things about a person.

Often foreigners were assumed to be outcasts from their home country. The Philadelphia editors of a collection of writing dealing with the riots wrote that statesmen

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56 Knobel, 12.
and patriots had been replaced by "outcast foreigners from every clime." The most virulent example of this view, however, was given in George Washington Parke Custis's funeral oration over General James Lingan. He prayed for the return of the days when American men would have protected an old statesmen like Lingan – the days "before America ... became gorged with filth from all the kennels in Europe!" Foreigners, therefore, were simply seen as the refuse of all other nations. Furthermore, they had not proven themselves as patriots in the way prisoners such as Lee and Lingan had during the Revolution because "their shoes [were] yet new, since they landed on our shores."

Foreigner was often associated with a criminal past. There is evidence that many foreigners, particularly Irish, had been sent to the United States as convicts. From the year 1700 to 1776, roughly sixteen percent of the 108,600 Irish immigrants to the United States were convicts. They were often indentured as servants for a number of years either in the city itself or in the surrounding counties. By 1790, however, indentured servitude in Maryland was moribund and black slavery had pushed it out completely by 1800. From 1776-1809 the percentage of Irish convicts who came to America fell to only two-thirds of one percent and by 1810 the practice of exporting convicts to the United States had ended. Nonetheless, the stereotype still existed. Indeed, the editors of one collection of documents on the riots published in 1812 described the editor of the Baltimore Whig newspaper as a "fugitive jacobin from Ireland." Also, The Maryland

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57 Interesting Papers, Intro. 2.
58 George Washington Parke Custis, "An Address Occasioned by the Death of General Lingan, delivered at Georgetown on 1 September 1812" (Boston: Bradford and Read, 1812), 32.
59 Custis, 6.
61 Interesting Papers, 81.
*Gazette* argues that the mob was made mostly of "copious extracts from foreign prisons ... of pickpockets, highwaymen ...."\(^{62}\)

The rioters were also accused of being career rioters and revolutionaries. The term "foreign renegadoes" was most frequently used to describe at least the leadership of the mob. A resolution passed by a number of persons in Kent County, Maryland went further and said that the mob was full of people, skilled in revolution, who fled to America to escape justice and were hoping to execute their rebellions in America with more success.\(^ {63}\) These accusations, however, were not simply convenient stereotypes. They refuted a common Republican charge in a very calculated manner. The Republicans, and their press more specifically, decried the Federalists and their press as destroyers of order. They argued that in time of war it was necessary for the public to come together to oppose their common foe and that the "defamatory scribblers" of the Federalist press were arousing riot and violence among passionate and dedicated patriots.\(^ {64}\) Furthermore, their actions were traitorous. Remarks about the Republican mob and, thus, Republicans in general were effective ways to refute those charges. The Federalists played on stereotypes about ethnic minorities, particularly the French and the Irish, as violent and revolutionary.\(^ {65}\) Add to this the fact that the Irish had been revolting against the Crown for years, and that the French Revolution had begun just over twenty years past and hence still in the memory of almost all citizens of Maryland. A counter-charge that it was a culture of violence in an impetuous mob that was destroying order

\(^{62}\) *Maryland Gazette*, September. 3, 1812.

\(^{63}\) *Interesting Papers*, 76.

\(^{64}\) *American & Commercial Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore), July 28, 1812.

\(^{65}\) Cassell, 244.
and not the armed defense of the freedom of the press by the peace-loving Federalists
would not be difficult to accept.

If Federalist papers were willing to argue that the mob was led by and made up of
career rioters who were forced to run from their home country, then their contentions that
the mob was fomented from abroad was a next logical step. A resolution passed in
Boston stated that in the Baltimore mob “French emissaries are the principle agents, and
the few deluded natives who join them are merely instruments in their hands.” Indeed,
many found it quite convenient to blame the riots on the war itself and the “dreadful
alliance” between France and America.66 This line of reasoning was not confined to the
Federalist bastions of the North-East. Hanson himself wrote that the destruction of his
press in Baltimore was an example of the French placing footholds in America.67

The defamatory term “foreigner” was not the only stereotype played on by the
Federalists. They were also willing to single out certain ethnic minorities. As has
already been hinted, the French were often vilified by the Federalist press. The French
Revolution was still a matter of recent memory and still conjured up images of blood
thirsty masses murdering at large. Although it was largely a matter of myth based on a
few isolated moments during the Terror, the collective image of the barbarous Jacobins
slaughtering aristocrats was both rich and resilient.68 Therefore, associating the crowd
with French immigrants was often an effective way to discredit them. The papers would
do this in a number of ways. They might claim that the mob or its leaders were
Frenchmen. Or, they might associate the mob itself or its actions with those of the
French Revolution.

66 Interesting Papers, 64-5; Cassell, 244.
67 Federal Republican, July 29, 1812.
68 Rudé, 28.
If the papers were willing to propose that the mob was a puppet of the French, its leadership granted them all the ammunition they would need. The leader of the mob that tore down the first *Federal Republican* office, Dr. Philip Lewis, was known as a French-born apothecary although in reality he was little more than a shopkeeper. It was this apothecary who informed the Mayor that “the laws of the land must sleep.” The Federalist press, of course, had a field day. The *Maryland Gazette* made mention of him and the *Federal Republican* itself derided the group of “ruffians” headed “by a paltry French apothecary!” This characterization of Lewis did not end in Maryland. A collection of papers about the riots published in Philadelphia similarly characterized Lewis.

As much as Lewis aided the Federalist cause, the leader of the mob that stormed the house on July 27th was a god-send. Dr. Gale, who was shot and killed from the windows of the Federalist stronghold, was not only a Frenchmen, another apothecary, but it was also likely that he may have been a bit deranged. William Leigh Pierce’s poem entitled “The Year; a poem” described Gale as “a bawling outcast,” “a lurking villain,” “[a] pander, quack,” and “[a] very madman, and almost a fool.” Indeed, Dr. Gale had taken out advertisements in the Baltimore papers claiming that he could cure all ills by electricity. The roles of these two men linked the Baltimore mob inextricably to images of the French Revolution and further to the myth of Jacobin anarchy which accompanied it. The mob was instantly associated through horrific images and stereotypes of the

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French, which would be immediately understood by people at the time, to a period of blood-lust, murder, and the destruction of traditional society.

As some writers were decrying the leaders of the mob as French apothecaries, and playing on common imagery of the French Revolution and immigrants, others were more blunt. The *Federal Republican* called the mob “a system of French revolutionary terror.”\(^{74}\) Others claimed that, when the laws were unable to protect, things return to a state of nature in which “we will become like the French.”\(^ {75}\) Similar statements were made in papers around the country as well as in numerous resolutions passed by cities and counties.\(^ {76}\) Often, the papers and resolutions made a value judgment on which was worse, the Parisian mob of the French Revolution or the mob in Baltimore. The mob in Baltimore always was.

Discussion of the French went beyond simple allusions to the Revolution, however. More overtly ethnically-based stereotypes were also used. Criticisms by the *Maryland Gazette* were especially vitriolic. First, the newspaper accused the French of being atheists and “more barbarous than the vandals, Nero and Caligula.”\(^ {77}\) Accusations against the religiosity of the immigrants could be quite detrimental. Religion was considered by many a definitive characteristic of American nationality. It was also remarkably divisive. Discussions of the violence of the French people in general were also not uncommon. A geography textbook for children, printed in 1812, denounced the

\(^{74}\) *Federal Republican*, July 27, 1812.  
\(^{75}\) *Interesting Papers*, Intro. 4.  
\(^{76}\) *Newport Mercury*, August 1, 1812 in “Horrible Scenes at Baltimore,” United States: 1812. – A reprint of an article from the *Philadelphia Freeman’s Journal*; and *Boston Repertory*, in *Interesting Papers*, 60-61; for Resolutions see *Interesting Papers*, “Resolutions at Boston,” 64-66, and “Resolutions in St Mary’s County [Md],” 66.  
\(^{77}\) *Maryland Gazette*, July 9, 1812.
“restless activity and volatile character” of the inhabitants of France. Not only were stereotypes of the French part of the common lexicon, they were being taught in the schools.

In the Report to the Committee of Grievances, Mayor Johnson blamed the riot on “low Irish” and Germans. It is almost impossible to corroborate this charge as lists of rioters and personal information about them is incomplete at best. It may have also been an attempt by the Mayor to distance the mob from the Republican Party and its leadership, or an honest mistake by upper-class witnesses who simply assumed the lower-class majority in the mob would be made of immigrants. Nonetheless, the characterization stuck. So much so that Henry Adams’s 1889 History of the United States repeats the charge.

The Maryland Gazette was especially critical of the Irish influence in the United States. The July 2, 1812 publication blamed the war in large part on the Irish. The Gazette reiterated the common theme of habitual revolutionaries. The Irish had been long repressed by England, it argued, and had long been waging insurrections with little success. Then, the editor of the Gazette, oddly enough, made a distinction within the Irish population. He calls the old Irish immigrants (probably Scotch-Irish) heroes and statesmen, while the newer Irish were embittered toward England and expounding their views in America. The Federalists viewed the new Irish as opposed to Federalism almost by definition. In a letter from Wagner to Hanson, while they were planning the

80 Ibid., 56-7.
81 Henry Adams, History of the United States of America During the First Administration of James Madison, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1890), 408.
reestablishment of the paper in Baltimore, Wagner expresses concern that their plan to use the building on Charles Street might be foiled by a “United Irishmen” who lived and worked downstairs and might try to keep them out. Although the Federalists disliked the French the most, the Irish came in a close second.

The Irish of the period were generally considered violent, opposed to authority, and of the lowest class. The criminal element was emphasized in the Irish case as well. An article from the *Federal Republican* noted that “the gentlemen from the Old Bailey recognize and greet their friends.” The Old Bailey was the central criminal court in London and the only court that could try criminals from all parts of the empire. The allusion to the criminality of the Irish was quite evident. One of the victims wrote home to his parents that a leader of the mob was a “noted Irish pugilist.” He is not mentioned in any of the other sources, however, nor did the Federalist press seize upon his identity. It is likely that if he did exist, the press would have made an example of him as they did with Dr. Lewis and Dr. Gale. Nonetheless, this offhand comment about the boxing skills of the leader seems to support the image of the Irish as a violent people.

Links between the Irish and the French were also common. When the Frenchman in Otho Sprigg’s cell saved his life, Sprigg notes that it was the Irishmen who responded, “He is a Frenchman. He has no tories in with him.” Sprigg’s narrative illustrates perfectly the unity of cause between the French and Irish that apparently many at the time would have understood. An Irishman would never believe that a Frenchman would put himself in danger to protect a Federalist. Also, while defending the honor of the Frenchman who protected him, Sprigg manages to discredit the French in general as

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82 *Interesting Papers*, 9-10.
83 “An Exact and Authentic Narrative,” 52-3.
being consistently anti-Federalist. The Gazette was also quick to play on the Irish-French connection as hereditary foes of England.\textsuperscript{84}

Oddly, despite the Mayor’s contention that many of the rioters were German, the Germans were completely ignored in the press and in other sources. One reason may have been that Germans did not have the tradition of convict labor that had been prevalent among the Irish. Although over 18,000 of the Irish who immigrated to the United States after 1700 had been convicts, this practice had never been used by Germans. Secondly, German immigration had not escalated in the U.S. to nearly the degree that Irish immigration had. Indeed, the 20,600 Germans who came to the United States between 1776 and 1809 paled in comparison to the almost 150,000 Irish who had landed on American shores.\textsuperscript{85} Germans were also often of a different social class than their Irish counterparts. Those Germans who came prior to 1815 were most likely wealthier than those who flooded to America afterward.\textsuperscript{86} Thus, a Federalist landowner’s experience with Irish and German immigrants was probably quite different – the Irish were arriving in great numbers, were mostly of the lower classes, and many were convicts; Germans, on the other hand, were fewer (thus less of a threat), of a higher social class, and none were convicts.

The conflict between neighborhoods also came to the surface as a result of the riots. As Baltimore possessed a reputation for being a rough town, Fells Point was the roughest part of all.\textsuperscript{87} It was also nearly synonymous with the lower classes and immigrants. Henry Lee, in his account of the riot, stated that the band in the house on

\textsuperscript{84} Maryland Gazette, July 2, 1812.
\textsuperscript{85} Fogleman, 71-5.
\textsuperscript{86} Farley, 809.
\textsuperscript{87} Hickey, 2, 4.
Charles Street had sent one of their members to Fells Point “the believed sons of the disloyal and turbulent” to see if “any gatherings of the brigands had taken place.”

Additionally, as the men were marched to the jail they passed a heap of paving stones which a group of men from the Point planned to throw at the Federalists, however, the “assassins,” led by a Mr. Worrel, arrived at the spot too late and the damage done was limited. Lastly, John Thompson, after being beaten nearly to death, was taken by cart to a tavern in Fells Point to give the identities of his friends. The Federal Republican was especially mindful of the Fells Point connection. It noted the overtly Republican sentiments of that neighborhood. Hanson tried to convince his Federalist readers that it is “the arbitrary will of Fells Point” which has closed the markets abroad of the Maryland farmers. On the topic of the mob, he writes that the second mob, the one that attacked the house on Charles Street and the jail, went “rallying and breaking thro’ the Point for fresh recruits. The “mob at Fell’s Point” was even mentioned as far away as Boston.

For Federalists then, ethnicity was becoming an important factor in determining nationality. They attempted to define who belonged in the nation by excluding other groups. For some Federalists, a popular conception was that of the “native” American. The publisher of the American Patriot in Savannah, Georgia sent a letter to the Federal Republican telling of his own confrontation with a mob that forced him to close his press. He noted that “a native American cannot walk the streets ... while foreign murders and felons are placed in our highest offices.” Despite the xenophobia present in the

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88 Lee, 5.
89 Ibid., 12; "An Exact and Authentic," 17.
90 "An Exact and Authentic," 45.
91 Federal Republican, July 27, 1812.
92 Ibid., July 29, 1812.
93 Interesting Papers, 18-24.
94 Federal Republican, July 29, 1812.
comment, it did not preclude the possibility of foreigners being Americans, simply not “native Americans” and so, nationality remained inclusive though still narrow. For others, nationality was exclusive. A letter sent by a “Soldier of ’76” to the *Maryland Gazette* said that the blood of “Americans” had been “shed by the hands of foreigners.”

This comment made nationality a fixed conception. Foreigners could not be Americans of any type – ethnicity was a proscriptive factor. For some Americans could still be made, for others they could only be born.

**Responses**

Indeed, as J. R. Pole points out, the Americans were in the process of “distinguishing between who was of the republic and who was only in it.” Yet, definitions were not yet fully hardened. Although, as mentioned above, ethnicity was becoming an important qualification for “Americanism,” the relative role of ethnicity was still in flux. Roy Harvey Pearce’s 1965 *Savagism and Civilization*, argued that the majority of white discourse about Indians from seventeenth century to mid-nineteenth had been Euro-Americans “talking to themselves about themselves.” Of course, this same logic applied to Baltimoreans (and Marylanders) as well. But, could not the Republicans and immigrants also define what it meant to be a part of the nation? In Baltimore they could and they did.

Immigrants attempted to establish that it was not ethnicity which defined an American. For them, Americans could indeed be made and the criteria for what made someone an American were much more fluid. For immigrants, and many Republicans

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95 *Maryland Gazette*, August 13, 1812.
96 Quoted in Knobel, 9.
who were politically allied with them, the quest was not to define “native” Americans but “true” Americans. To be a true American was typically a matter of political character. Although this often meant Republicanism, it more frequently referred to an adherence to many of the values of Republicans. The most important Republican value at the time of the riots was loyalty to the country and government leaders and, especially, in support for the nation at war. Republican and Federalist papers alike called their party the “friends of social order.” Nonetheless, while for the Republicans political character was the most important factor in one’s nationality, ethnicity was still a divisive issue. Republicans would try to assert their political character while distancing themselves from immigrants ethnically, at the same time they would impeach the political character of their Federalist counterparts, often using the same images and stereotypes.

One can easily judge the effect and the saliency of this line of reasoning by examining the Republican papers on the issue. In response to charges that they were “the contemptible and traitorous puppets of Frenchmen,” Republicans distanced their cause from that of the French. Rather, they framed the cause for war in terms of defense of the freedom of the seas against the impressment of sailors. In fact, one newspaper wrote that those in Boston were hypocrites for opposing impressment during the American Revolution but not during the present conflict. Further, the Republican press was consistently refuting Federalist assertions that Republicans wished America to join with the French. They argued instead that they simply opposed the English out of necessity – Britain, the great naval power, was more of a threat to America and its commerce.

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98 The exact phrase was quoted in the Federalist paper Maryland Gazette, July 9, 1812. A similar feeling was expressed in the American & Commercial Daily Advertiser, August 18, August 19, 1812.
99 Federal Republican, July 29, 1812.
100 American, July 31, 1812.
101 Ibid., August 5, 1812.
Obviously, attempts by Federalists to make the Republicans out to be puppets of the French hit close enough to home that Republicans felt the need to address them. The chauvinistic impulse of the time appears a matter of collective consciousness that transcended party lines; the Federalists used it as a weapon, while the Republicans defended against it. While it is easy to see why Federalist papers would use this line of insult as an available and effective tool to discredit Republicans among their own readers, the question becomes more complex when one attempts to discern why Republicans would feel the need to refute accusations of being foreigners in a paper whose readers were frequently immigrants.

Immigrants, first of all, relied on the language of assimilation to deem themselves members of the republic. An advertisement taken out one and a half years prior to the riots, in the *Federal Republican & Commercial Gazette*, is particularly poignant. The Scottish St. Andrew’s Society announced their celebration of St. Andrew’s Day as “a meeting of Brothers in a chosen and adopted country, whose hearts were warmed by the pleasing recollections of their native land.”¹⁰² This passage well illustrates the priorities of immigrants as members of the republic. Their use of the words “chosen” and “adopted,” and their italicization of them no less, is testament to their belief in the process of assimilation and that Americans could indeed be made. Yet, it also points out that immigrants were unwilling to sacrifice certain traditions and ethnic identifiers. Most obviously, their “pleasing recollections” of Scotland show an unwillingness to leave behind their “native land” and to submit fully to the idea of America as hearth and home. The celebration of St. Andrew’s Day in the first place also represents their different view of assimilation. In a time when the major criteria for American identity were race,

¹⁰² *Federal Republican & Commercial Gazette*, December 6, 1810.
religion, and political character, public testimonials to Catholicism could be quite
divisive and show a staunch resistance to the idea that one must fit all the criteria to be
American.

In another interesting instance of "immigrants" defining their national character,
*The Boston Repertory* had written an article which claimed that the editor of *The
American & Commercial Daily Advertiser*, William Pechin, was a Frenchman. In
response to this charge, Pechin reprinted a quotation from the *Philadelphia Democratic
Press* that stated that he was "born in the city of Philadelphia" and that his father was "a
good and zealous Whig during the Revolution." Pechin argued that the charges that he is
a Frenchman had begun in years previous in a Federalist paper while he edited a different
Republican paper, and had been disproved. 103 If so, then the *Boston Repertory* is unlikely
to have forgotten. Rather, the Federalist paper must have hoped to injure Pechin's
reputation, as well as that of the Republican Party, among other Federalists unlikely to
have read Pechin's response. The accusation that he was French must have been a potent
insult if the *Repertory* would use it more than once.

Pechin's retort to the *Boston Repertory* is enlightening for many reasons. For
one, he seems to adhere to many of the same stereotypes as the Federalists. His response
in this instance requires a nuanced analysis. He argued that he was "an American by
birth, as well as in principle," and "too proud and tenacious of my claim to such
character" to permit others to take it from him. 104 First, he contended that being an
American not merely a matter of birth but of ideas. Yet, his belief that his American
"character" could be stolen from him by claims against his "*birthright*" suggest

otherwise. Logically then, even Pechin, one of the most vociferous proponents of Republicanism, believed that while immigrants could be assimilated, the national allegiance of those Americans was inherently suspect. This is also evidence that the accusation of "foreigner" was remarkably offensive, even to those who bore many of the same political allegiance as those foreigners.

The discussion of his father, however, adds another twist to his opinion of what it meant to be an American. Obviously an immigrant (or else Pechin likely would have claimed a birthright for him as well and ended the discussion), the national character of Pechin’s father is based solely on his political allegiance; that he was a Whig during the Revolution. Additionally, Pechin argued that his father loaned money to the United States so that it could prosecute the Revolutionary War and that he traded his specie “dollar for dollar” for paper money to help the army through troubling times. Therefore, his father was a tried and true patriot who had stood by the United States in the most unimpeachable of moments – the Revolutionary War. From these stands of opinion in Pechin’s retort, one can unravel that while immigrants could be valuable members of the republic, they were not inherently so. Also, it is evident that while political character could trump ethnicity in 1812 Baltimore, even those who identified with foreigners politically sought to distance themselves from them ethnically. Ethnic fissures were developing.

Pechin had used the image of the French Revolution in his attempts to discredit the Federalist band as well. He reminded Federal Republican editor Jacob Wagner that the most “cruel stabs to freedom” during the Revolution in France “came from Marat, who published a paper like the ‘Federal Republican’” and brought together armed men to
defend the paper against its detractors. Common policy among the majority of the Republican papers, however, was to agree with the motives of the mob while condemning their actions. Pechin's paper was no exception. He used the French Revolution as an image for this purpose as well. A letter to the paper noted that the mob scene reminded the writer of the "horrors of the French Revolution" and he denounced all "sanguinary cannibals." It is likely that Republicans realized the backlash they would suffer as a result of the riot and so sought to distance their party from the mob, as Mayor Johnson had done by blaming the riot on immigrants. The French Revolution was a remarkably powerful image that had become part of common discourse and was used by both sides.

In other attempts to denounce the nationality of the Federalists, the Republicans would attempt to color them as immigrants in sentiment if not in reality. Toward this end the phrase "Tory" was quite popular and was used numerous times during the riots as well as in the press. The term linked the Federalists to the English with whom America was at war. As the Federalists accused the Republican immigrants of being puppets of their native lands, the Republicans did the same. The American suggested that the men in the house were incorrect in assuming that the militia could protect them of their own accord because they did not realize there was no Riot Act in America unlike under the British authorities they were used to. Another editorial suggested that, in a "foreign style to Americans," Federalists rejoice in American failures in the war because they

105 Ibid., August 11, 1812.
106 The Republicans had controlled the state government almost uninterrupted since 1801. In October of 1812, the Federalists won a sound majority in the House of Delegates and managed to elect a Federalist governor. Cassell, 242, 259.
107 American, August 19, 1812.
made “common cause with the enemy.” It stopped just short of accusing them of having been bribed by the English crown.\textsuperscript{108}

Other Republicans accused the Federalists who took the house of being foreigners, though not to the country but to Baltimore. One editorial called the Federalist band “a corps composed of strangers from distant places” and “an armed band of strangers who made lodgment in a house in Baltimore.” The article goes on to describe that the persons in the house were not neighbors, nor did they have to go to the house at all. Rather, they assembled to terrorize the people of Baltimore.\textsuperscript{109} There were still, therefore, remnants of the community solidarity of the eighteenth century, and Republicans would play on those surviving bits to combat the divisive ethnic language of the Federalists.

\textbf{Internalization}

With all the stereotypes that defined immigrants in the early nineteenth century, to what extent did immigrants internalize those stereotypes? The majority of immigrants in Baltimore at the time (as in much of the rest of the country) were Irish and German. The sources of Irish discussion of themselves, however, are much more available than those of the Germans. Over the years of immigration, although there was a fairly large German population in Baltimore, the majority tended to move to the frontiers and the farmlands of western Maryland in particular. But perhaps more importantly, prior to 1820, Germans were much more likely to associate amongst themselves. Germans attended their own churches, spoke their native tongue, and maintained their own newspapers. Discussion of

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Ibid.}, August 26, 1812.

\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Ibid.}, August 11, 1812.
Germans for this reason was almost absent from the papers of either side during the time of the riots. Also, there were no real instances of Germans referring to themselves. While Irish or Scots from time to time took out advertisements of celebrations such as holidays, marriages, funerals, the Fourth of July, in the major papers depending on their political allegiances, Germans did not because none of their friends would have read them. Also, some of the more incidental mentions of immigrants that can often be quite instructive as to values and concerns, were absent for Germans. Book sellers, for example, used the papers to market books to Irish but not to Germans, because many Germans only read newspapers written in their native tongue.

Discernment of Irish internalization is much more effective during this period. Irish immigrants would often use the local Republican papers. The *Baltimore Whig* seems to have been a popular choice among the Irish based on the advertisements both by, and aimed toward, them. In the months following the declaration of war against England, a series of advertisements directed toward Irishmen appeared in the *Whig*. In the majority, a plea was made to other Irish to join a volunteer corps to defend the city. Upon examination one can clearly see that the Irish defend their patriotism and nationality to those who wish to exclude them, while simultaneously using the language of exclusion in talking to each other.

In one such advertisement, the author claimed that the purpose of a volunteer corps composed solely of Irishmen was not an “invidious” one but was to “give an instance of devotion to the cause of America.” This statement made clear that the Irish felt they were distrusted by the majority and so must allay their fears. In order to do so, they made a claim based on allegiance to their adopted country, which they hoped would

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110 For examples see: *Baltimore Whig*, September 9, 1812; September 10, 1812; September 12, 1812.
outweigh any ill purpose which their ethnicity may imply. Another, advertisement in the same paper, announced that the meeting to form the corps had been held and then postponed as a result of its short notice. This advertisement was more vigilant in its assertions that “all patriotic Irishmen” would attend and show the American nation that Irishmen would “rally around the standard of their adopted country.”111 Another asks them to come to the defense of liberty under “the banners of America.”112 A book of Irish songs, published in Baltimore in 1812, entitled The Harp of Erin, also made claims of assimilation. The songs identified with routing the British and with the quintessential American patriot, George Washington.113 Again, the Irishmen assured their critics that nationality can be made and, moreover, proven.

Nonetheless, while they were confirming their national character to the majority, they were also using the stereotypes which excluded them. The first example, of course, is that the immigrants felt the need to assure those, even in their own city who agreed with them politically, that their volunteer corps was not for an evil cause. The articles in the Whig seem to support the assumption that the Irish were either revolutionaries from Ireland who had run to the United States or, perhaps, even agents from Ireland. Each asked the Irish to join the corps to chastise England for their enslavement of Ireland and to place the “crest” of England at the “feet of Ireland and America [italics mine].”114 Though they continued to clamor for full status as Americans, the Irish continued, in their pleas to each other, to make linkages based on ethnic, rather than political, identity.

Furthermore, a summary of a letter from Ireland, printed in the June 19th issue told of a

111 Baltimore Whig, September 12, 1812.  
112 Ibid., September 9, 1812.  
114 Baltimore Whig, September 9, 1812.
bourgeoning insurrection in the south of Ireland in which Catholics were seizing arms and burning houses. War with United States, it argued, “will probably crown their efforts with success.” One reading the article might have accepted the stereotype that the War was being pushed for in America by agents with ties to Ireland, or perhaps even by Ireland itself.

These advertisements also supported broad stereotypes of the Irish as violent or of poor moral fiber. The article of September 12 was most illustrative. It warned that “lameness” of either “body or reputation” was a disqualifying factor for the volunteer corps. Also, they argued that neither “deranged men, nor busy-bodies” would sway them from their goals. The songs portray many of the same stereotypes of the Irish. Numerous songs colored them as violent both in war and in daily life. More specifically, they often portrayed themselves as a lawless people who fight the police and consider their weapons “a limb of the law.” They are also portrayed as poor and lower class. A song called “Paddy O’Leary” tells of a man, Paddy, whose wife runs out on him with a “dirty coal heaver.” This song, and others, further exemplified the common stereotypes about the Irish as poor, violent, drunkards, and papists.

The ability to generalize about either Irish internalization of stereotypes is limited by the scarcity of source material in which Irish are addressing each other and in which these issues of nationality arise. Moreover, it is nearly impossible to generalize about immigrants in general (for example the French and the Germans) from the limited experiences of the Irish. What can be said is that the Irish who participated in this

115 Ibid., June 19, 1812.
118 Paddy was often used as a derogatory term for Irish in Ante-Bellum America. It was usually associated with poverty, violence, and popery. O’Neil, “Paddy O’Leary,” 44-5.
discourse both rejected aspersions of their national character through the language of assimilation. Yet, when addressing each other, these Irish tended to relate on an ethnic level and, at times, used the stereotypes which excluded them from the majority. One can also infer that these images were also common to many others or else their use of mass media would have been entirely ineffective.

Conclusion

The Baltimore Riots of 1812 were a political crisis of the first order. Few other events did as much to turn public sentiment against the War of 1812. They also exemplified the social fissures which were taking place in the young republic. Baltimore was a Jacksonian democracy before Jacksonian democracy bore the name. It was a city that was in internally divided but was outwardly unified. When combined with a war with almost as many detractors as supporters, Baltimore’s singular support for the war effort was bound to bring turmoil.

The riots also provide an excellent lens through which to view immigrant relations prior to the immigrant surges after 1820. Passions were at their peak and stereotypes became the order of the day. Immigrants were scapegoated for the riots, though their involvement is almost certain. But, whatever the extent of their involvement, images that may have been private came to the surface to describe these people who did not quite belong. Negative images of the French, the Irish, and foreigners more generally were abundant in the Federalist press and elsewhere. Even Republicans seemed reluctant to support their immigrant political allies fully. And immigrants, as
they tried to assert their national character based on assimilation still, at times fell victim to their own stereotypes.

All of this represented an early attempt to discover the relative importance of ethnicity on nationality. Although using ethnicity as a proscriptive factor did not become popular until later in the nineteenth century, its roots are found in the Baltimore Riots. It was there, during times of crisis, that Republicans, Federalists, and immigrants began an argument over the criteria of nationality. They attempted to determine who was “of the republic and who was only in it.” 119 The definition, however, was still in flux. Some Federalists believed that it was vital to be a “native” American while others thought that Americans might still be made and proven. Republicans were far more willing to accept immigrants as good Americans, though in many cases they were inherently suspect. Nonetheless, the community solidarity of the eighteenth century was on its way out and people were divided by social classifications of race, religion, class, and ethnicity.

As George Custis stood on a platform shaded by oaks in a green outside Georgetown, on September 1, 1812, he reminded a throng of the days when Americans would have prevented the death of General James Lingan. 120 Lingan must have remembered those days as well when, on the night of July 28, 1812, he begged on his knees for mercy. He reminded his attackers that he had fought in the Revolution, and that he was an old man with a helpless family that depended on him for support. Yet, perhaps the men who attacked him that evening in front of the jail, not far from the Jones Falls, did not recognize the old general as an American as they defined it. Maybe, as his

119 Quoted in Knobel, 9.
120 Custis, 32.
assailants beat him to death on his knees to shouts of “Tory,” Lingan realized he didn’t recognize them either.¹²¹

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