New York. By the second half of the nineteenth century, Catholics became the "largest religious tradition" in the U.S., as Catholic immigrants made their mark in their new home (Crews, 1994).

Despite, or perhaps because of, Catholic immigrants' successes within their communities, U.S. Protestants largely rejected Catholic immigrants who arrived in the nineteenth century. During the mid-1800s, nativism was at its peak, as nativist parties such as the Know Nothings gained increasing influence. Notable political leaders, such as Civil War general and former President Ulysses S. Grant, were affiliated with the Know Nothings (Anbinder, 1997), and blatantly anti-foreign sentiment flooded the media. For example, Samuel Morse, inventor of the telegraph, wrote a book titled *The Foreign Conspiracy Against the Liberties of the United States* in 1835 (Crew, 1994). Fear of "foreign conspiracies" were also reflected in newspaper editorials, as exemplified by George Prentice's 1855 editorial from the *Louisville Journal*:

> **...and especially are men fit to hold office...who regard themselves as owing to our government no allegiance from which the Pope of Roman, an inflated Italian despot who keeps people kissing his toes all day, cannot at any moment release him?...Until the light of Protestantism shone in the world there was no religious freedom. Popery, with its iron heel, treads out the life of religious liberty as fast as it is born.... (as cited in Crews, 1994, p. 74)**

Anti-Catholicism was often expressed through early nineteenth century novels, as well. In *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery*, Maria Monk shares outrageous details about her stay at a Catholic convent, in which she witnessed priests using their authority to seduce nuns and then murder the resultant babies. Though Monk's story was formally discredited soon after its publication, it nonetheless made its impact on Protestant Americans, as it was the "second bestselling title" in antebellum U.S. (Holscher, 2012, p. 63).

In addition to anti-Catholic literature, the era was also characterized by notable acts of anti-Catholic violence, such as the Ursuline Covenant incident. The Ursuline Covenant was a prestigious Catholic school that represented Catholics' growing economic stability. Though this school taught many Protestants and had no explicit missionary component, a mob burnt the covenant down, along with several Irish homes after a rumor spread of an imprisoned nun. This incident foreshadowed future violence, as demonstrated in

frequent anti-Catholic mob attacks of the 1830s and 1840s, including the notorious Philadelphia riots of 1844 (Morris, 1997).

Philadelphia contained the largest concentration of Catholic immigrants, aside from New York, and tensions between these immigrants and nativists exploded after some Irish immigrants interrupted an American Republican protest meeting that revolved around Protestant Bible-reading in public schools. This prompted an enormous anti-Catholic rally, composed of approximately 3,000 nativists, in the heart of Irish Philadelphia. Fighting soon erupted, and both Catholics and nativists fought with violent force, resulting in several causalities on both sides and the burning down of two Catholic churches, St. Michael and St. Augustine. Catholic church-burning persisted throughout the nation, and some priests were even beaten or tarred and feathered. Ten years after the Philadelphia riots, in 1855, another exceptionally violent incident occurred in Louisville. On what is now referred to as "Bloody Monday," at least twenty people were killed after anti-Catholic violence was blatantly provoked by the Louisville mayor (Morris, 1997).

Understanding the nation's unique religious history offers key insight into the religious turmoil of the 1800s. American historian Wallace D. Farnham argues that three peculiarities have characterized the U.S.'s religious identity. First, the U.S. has Protestant origins. Outside the U.S., most Christian people were originally Catholic, therefore making Protestantism radical and Catholicism traditional and conservative. In the United States, however, since most citizens associate Protestantism with their country's founders, they perceive Protestantism as the "'normal' version of Christianity" and Catholicism as an outside, foreign force (Farnham, 1961, p. 47). The second peculiarity Farnham notes is America's religious pluralism. Even from its origin, various sects of Protestantism existed, creating a diverse religious environment. Religious dissenters, such as William Penn, a Quaker from Pennsylvania, often had significant political influence. Notably, however, these dissenters remained in the realm of Protestantism. Third, a large number of Catholic immigrants arrived during the Industrial Revolution, a time of vast change. Many citizens associated this influx of foreign people with other "foreign", or unfamiliar, changes, such as the development of cities and factories