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## Vermont Nativism: William Paul Dillingham and U.S. Immigration Legislation

*Dillingham . . . brought Vermont's  
nativist sentiments into play in the  
formulation of U.S. immigration policy,  
establishing a pattern of restrictive  
laws that endured until 1968.*

By JOHN M. LUND

**A**ntagonism, enmity, and opposition toward immigration is a recurring theme in U.S. history, despite treasured images of America as the land of opportunity, a refuge from oppression, and a melting pot that dissolves ethnic and national differences to create a distinctly new cultural identity. Anti-immigrant sentiments have resulted in political programs and policies favoring the interests of native inhabitants over those of recent arrivals. Manifestations of nativism at times fueled visions of Anglo-Saxon superiority and led to the enactment of federal immigration restrictions.

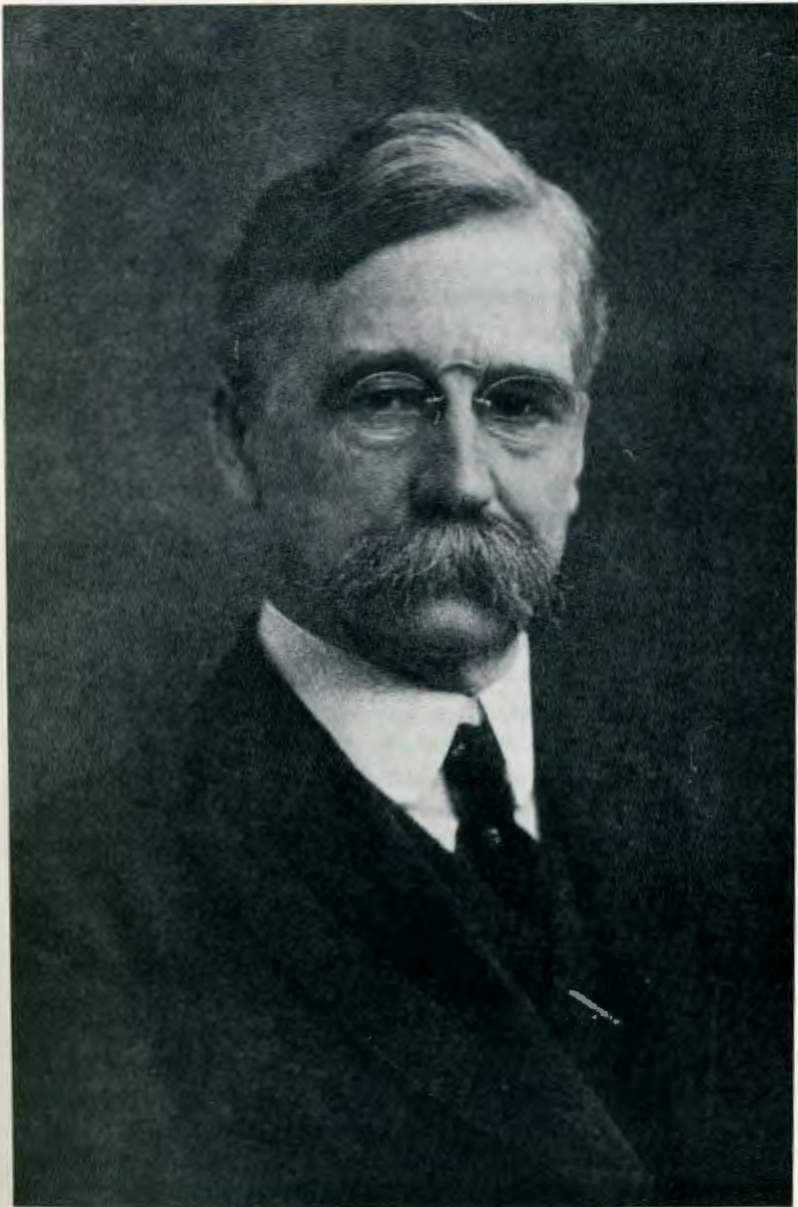
In Vermont an unexamined tradition of nativism existed before social Darwinism lent scientific credibility to anti-immigrant assertions.<sup>1</sup> By national standards the state had neither a substantial immigrant population nor large urban centers. Still, many Vermonters shared the assumption that the rural communities of Anglo-Saxon Protestants embodied a way of life that instilled virtue, whereas cities, with their immigrant proletariat and its mix of religions, dialects, and cultures, bred immorality, disease, poverty, and crime. As Vermont's farming population declined after the mid-nineteenth century and the republic became increasingly

urban, Vermont nativists urged immigration restriction to preserve the policies, attitudes, and ideals that reflected rural life and centered on property rights, morality, and orderly behavior.

The origins of nativism are rooted in religious tensions. Nativists asserted that Catholicism constituted "a form of slavery at odds with American conceptions of liberty, since Catholics were obligated to follow authority rather blindly rather than display the manly independence of Protestants."<sup>2</sup> For the early Protestant settlers of Vermont, Catholic reliance on priests and the pope for divine revelation raised the specter of foreign influence and subverted the central tenet of Protestantism, the priesthood of all believers. The Vermont Constitution of 1777 barred from office those who did not "profess the Protestant religion."<sup>3</sup> Vermonters further guarded their state against foreign influence in an 1828 state constitutional amendment that limited privileges of freemen to those who were native-born or naturalized citizens.<sup>4</sup>

Immigration accelerated dramatically in the late 1840s and triggered a nativist backlash. Vermonters targeted Irish Catholics who had been driven from their homeland by potato famine and had come to the state to construct railroads. When cases of cholera appeared in Burlington in 1849—part of a larger epidemic that struck the East Coast—many pointed to Irish Catholic immigrants as the cause and linked them to an array of social ills.<sup>5</sup> Authorities in Burlington warned that these "immigrants are both paupers, and diseased, and become a charge upon the Town, and a cause of sickness, and a source of danger to the public health." A physician was authorized to inspect those who arrived via Lake Champlain, and a \$100 fine was levied on steamship captains who did not comply with the inspections.<sup>6</sup>

Intense antforeign, anti-Catholic sentiment in the early 1850s led to the rise of the secretive fraternal Order of the Star-Spangled Banner, more commonly known as Know-Nothings. Founded in New York City in 1850, Know-Nothingism rose from obscurity and united nativist sentiments throughout the nation by forming a new political party, the American Party, in 1854. Members pledged to end the spread of Catholicism, restrict the immigration of paupers and criminals, extend the period required for naturalization from five to twenty-one years, and vote only for American-born Protestants. The order's promotion of temperance struck a chord in Vermont, where prohibition had been enacted in 1853. State prohibition was intended to uphold the virtue rural Vermonters perceived to be threatened by the menacing drunken Irish immigrant, who seemed indifferent to "moral suasion." The secretive order also appealed to Vermont Protestant sensibilities with its vows to oppose the Catholic decree issued at the First Plenary Council in Baltimore in 1852. This



*William Paul Dillingham. From Journal of American History, 2d ed., 1912.*

edict, which called for the removal of Catholic students from public schools and opposed the use of the Protestant Bible in public schools, struck at the heart of New England values by rejecting the common school system. The council confirmed Vermont nativists' suspicions that Catholicism eroded republican virtue by undermining the Protestant emphasis on literacy.<sup>7</sup>

Fear of Catholic immigrants moved nativists in Vermont to action. The establishment of the Burlington diocese in 1853 generated street preaching and church sermons against Irish and French Canadian Catholics.<sup>8</sup> Thousands of Vermonters joined Know-Nothing councils and swore oaths of allegiance to protect the republic "against every form of foreign influence."<sup>9</sup> By some estimates more than 100 members of the Vermont House represented Know-Nothingism in 1856. Ryland Fletcher, a Know-Nothing leader, served as Republican lieutenant governor in 1854 and 1855 and as governor from 1856 to 1857. Fletcher believed immigrants brought the "mortal disease [of] monarchy and despotism, of Romanism and heathenism . . . which left unchecked would sweep away our most cherished liberties and dearest institutions."<sup>10</sup> In 1855 Know-Nothings in the state organized the American Party of Vermont. The party's principles included a pledge to "secure a modification of the naturalization laws" and end "the deportation, by foreign authorities, of paupers and convicts to our shores."<sup>11</sup>

Other Vermonters followed the axioms of the Know-Nothings. George Perkins Marsh, a former Vermont congressman, statesman, and natural philosopher, advocated nativism and was "committed . . . to the repeal or at least restriction of the right of naturalization, and resistance to Catholic commandments." Marsh declared that "our liberties are in greater danger from the political principles of Catholicism than from any other cause."<sup>12</sup> But nativism extended beyond disdain for Catholics, as was evident when the Montpelier statehouse burned in 1857 and Burlington was suggested as the new state capital. Speaker of the House George W. Grandey, a former Know-Nothing from Vergennes, berated the proposed site as the "great JEWrusalem of V[ermon]t" whose supposed "greatness and superiority" was not recognized by "the rural districts."<sup>13</sup>

By 1856, as the sectional conflict over slavery split the national Know-Nothing organization, former Vermont council members and those with similar sympathies were absorbed into the ranks of the emerging Republican Party. Nativism merged with the Republican principles of protection of domestic markets, labor, and the preservation of the identity, virtue, and status of the old Vermont families who made up the party leadership. The Republican Party's platform of 1860 reiterated the tenets of Know-Nothingism by vowing to resist changes "in our naturalization laws . . .

by which the rights of citizens hitherto accorded to immigrants . . . shall be abridged or impaired." The party championed "full and efficient protection [of] the rights of . . . citizens, whether native or naturalized."<sup>14</sup>

Vermont's Republican U.S. senator Justin Smith Morrill combined nativism with the party policy of protectionism. He introduced successful protective tariff legislation along with bills for establishing agricultural and manufacturing colleges to foster husbandry and domestic production. He also turned his attention to immigration, in 1887 proposing a bill to restrict undesirable immigrants. Morrill warned that the "future character of the American people . . . republican institutions, higher wages, land homesteads, [and] universal education" were threatened by immigrants who settled in "the most inferior and wretched abodes found in cities, and [who] will not accept of health and prosperous homes elsewhere." Applying the doctrine of social Darwinism espoused by Herbert Spencer, Morrill argued that race and ethnicity predetermined the ability to become Americanized. Unlike the "Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian and German immigrants [who] have been easily digested and assimilated," the southern and eastern Europeans bore "the mark of Cain" and constituted a class of "outcasts and criminals," imbeciles, idiots, and lunatics.<sup>15</sup>

Morrill's successor in the U.S. Senate, William Paul Dillingham, continued to show Vermont's rural biases in questions of national immigration and achieved eminence as a spokesman for restriction. Dillingham's involvement in immigration began during his term as governor of Vermont. Elected in 1888, Dillingham included in his opening address to the legislature an admonition to its members to guard rural Protestant ideals by enforcing legislation to correct social ills associated with immigrants: "The laws for the encouragement of virtue and prevention of vice and immorality ought to be kept constantly in force." High rates of insanity and indigence headed the governor's list of pressing issues. He equated economic failure with moral failure and mental instability with an overall innate inferiority of the new arrivals. Finding the Brattleboro asylum to be inadequate to house such pariahs, Dillingham recommended building an additional facility in Waterbury and oversaw the subsequent construction and completion of the state hospital in 1891. Concern over breaches of the state's prohibition laws led the governor to advocate imprisonment for violators—generally assumed to be members of Vermont's Irish Catholic population. Dillingham also emphasized literacy as the guardian of sound government. Under his directive the Vermont legislature passed a law that required standardized tests of teacher proficiency.<sup>16</sup>

The greatest problem facing the governor, however, was rural depopulation, which caused a statewide economic and business slump. Indeed,

Dillingham confronted a decade of acute agricultural decline as rural Vermonters migrated to Burlington and Rutland, to cities of southern New England, and to the West. From 1880 to 1890 the population of the state grew by only 136 people.<sup>17</sup> Dillingham responded by creating a commission to study ways to induce settlement of abandoned hilltown farms. He appointed A. B. Valentine of Bennington to head the inquiry and to ascertain whether "legislative action" should be taken for "the permanent establishment of a [state] bureau or commissioner of immigration."<sup>18</sup> The governor instructed Valentine to collect "statistical material" on the prices of farm property, compare these figures to those of other states, and investigate the methods other states used to encourage immigrants to take up farming.<sup>19</sup> The commissioner sent questionnaires to all Vermont towns to establish the amount and location of the most severely depopulated areas. From the figures he gathered, Valentine reported that 10 percent of Vermont farmland that had once been cultivated lay fallow.<sup>20</sup>

The governor also authorized Valentine to travel to the West to observe the characteristics of immigrants who were settling there and determine the most desirable group to repopulate Vermont. The commissioner concluded that "the hard-working, honest Scandinavian" immigrant could answer Vermont's problems. He asserted that geographical similarities between Scandinavia and Vermont made Swedes uniquely suited to Vermont's climate. Upholding the central place of literacy, the Swedes "are well educated, and hasten to have their children attend school where English only is spoken." Moral and virtuous, "they are temperate in their habits and are religiously inclined."<sup>21</sup> In short, these immigrants from northern Europe fit Dillingham's cultural vision of rural Americanism.

The governor directed that maps of Vermont be sent to Sweden to publicize the opportunities the state offered. This effort persuaded twenty-seven Swedish families to emigrate. Arriving in April 1890, they traveled from New York City to the hilltowns of Wilmington, Weston, and Vershire. Dillingham personally visited the towns to welcome them. Celebrating the new arrivals' Protestantism, he noted approvingly that "like our forefathers, they brought their pastor with them."<sup>22</sup>

Dillingham did not act alone in trying to attract northern and western Europeans to Vermont. Redfield Proctor, Vermont marble magnate, secretary of war under President Benjamin Harrison, and later U.S. senator, favored Scandinavian immigrants as workers in his quarries. In the late 1870s and throughout the 1880s, Proctor instructed his agents in New York and Boston to recruit Swedes rather than southern and eastern European or Irish immigrants. Although he employed Protestant northern Italians in Proctor, his belief in the existence of analogous moral norms between northwestern Europeans and Vermonters and the superiority of

Anglo-Saxons led him to hire disproportionate numbers of Swedes as foremen.<sup>23</sup>

In his valedictory to the legislature, Dillingham lauded the Swedish newcomers and criticized Catholic seasonal agricultural laborers. The governor declared that a rural proletariat composed of a Catholic "foreign-born population" could not "be depended upon to maintain the number of our farmers," whereas Swedes contributed "a great and lasting benefit to the State."<sup>24</sup> Other Vermonters shared Dillingham's disdain for the presence of Catholic seasonal farmworkers in the Yankee kingdom. Vermont writer Rowland Robinson extolled the virtues of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism and asserted that Catholic French Canadians added a corrupt element to the state's social fabric. He believed these newcomers poorly compensated for the state's rural depopulation. Robinson depicted them as an "inferior class" whose religious beliefs stigmatized them as "heretics." Attributing to them an innate criminality, he wrote that they could not help but steal, "for their fingers were as light as their hearts." Alleged to be inherently indigent and lazy, they threatened to dilute Vermont's Anglo-Saxon stock and poison the public health with "litters of filthy brats."<sup>25</sup>

The late-nineteenth-century exaltation of Anglo-Saxonism carried over into the formation of Vermont hereditary societies. One of these, the Society of Colonial Wars, germinated in New York City in 1892 and spread quickly throughout the Northeast. Dillingham played a key role in establishing the Vermont chapter in 1894. Requiring of members sound "moral character" and proof of direct family lineage to colonists who fought for independence during the American Revolution, the society aimed at "perpetuating the memory" of the colonial past. The organization claimed Protestants as the true founders and guardians of the principles that defined the republic's moral and ethical standards. From 1894 to 1896 Dillingham served as legal counsel to the society without compensation, and later he was its president.<sup>26</sup> In the 1890s he joined and served as president of the Vermont Society of the Sons of the American Revolution. Dillingham also traced his own ancestry to the settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630.<sup>27</sup> Dillingham's activities in these groups bolstered his cultural vision of Anglo-Saxonism and heightened his perception of the inferiority of immigrants who came from different stock than did his northwestern European forebears.

The death of Senator Morrill in October 1899 propelled Dillingham to the U.S. Senate. Elected by the Vermont legislature to complete Morrill's unexpired term, Dillingham took his seat in the Senate in December 1900. Republican control facilitated his access to the Senate leadership.<sup>28</sup> In 1901 Dillingham served on the Committee on Transportation Routes to



the Seaboard, which examined immigration routes from Europe; the following year he was named chairman.<sup>29</sup> After fellow Vermont senator Redfield Proctor left the Senate Immigration Committee in January 1902, Dillingham took his place.<sup>30</sup> He increasingly focused his energies on immigration restriction.

Dillingham's first speech on the Senate floor in April 1902 initiated debate over the terms of restrictions on Chinese immigration, which had come up for renewal. He declared that even though he had "not come into contact with this class of people," barring the Chinese from entry into the country constituted the best method to "protect American labor." After a protracted debate, the Senate voted with Dillingham for the permanent exclusion of the Chinese "coolie laborer."<sup>31</sup>

Reelected to a full term by an overwhelming majority in the Vermont legislature in 1903, Dillingham continued to press for limits on immigration.<sup>32</sup> Named chairman of the Senate Immigration Committee in 1903, he promoted the immigration act passed that year. The law mandated a two-dollar head tax on each immigrant to establish an "immigration fund" for the maintenance of ports of arrival. Proof of the increased concern over the economic dimension of immigration, the law transferred immigration responsibilities from the Treasury Department to the newly formed Department of Commerce and Labor.<sup>33</sup>

In the following years Dillingham concentrated on securing immigrant farm labor and advocated the creation of an informational display bureau at Ellis Island to describe the opportunities of rural life.<sup>34</sup> Dillingham also sought to alleviate overcrowding of immigrant tenement districts. He supported medical and mental examinations of immigrants to prevent the entry of the feeble-minded and those who carried disease.<sup>35</sup>

In keeping with Progressive efforts to build a better society, President Theodore Roosevelt in 1905 appealed to Congress to limit the "wrong" sort of immigrant and to find a method to induce immigrants to settle "the land and keep them away from the congested tenement-house districts of the great cities."<sup>36</sup> This directive spurred Dillingham to attempt a major overhaul of immigration policy, and in 1906 he introduced amendments to that effect. After a series of conference committee meetings under Dillingham's leadership, Congress in 1907 enacted a measure to set up a joint House-Senate commission to study problems in immigration policy and propose solutions.<sup>37</sup> It fell to Dillingham to chair the commission, and because of his subsequent leadership role over the next four years, the investigations were popularly referred to as the Dillingham Commission reports.

Dillingham exercised extensive power over the direction and expenditures of the commission. He authorized the time and place of all com-

mission meetings and all expenditures under \$500. To oversee larger disbursements, he appointed a five-member committee over which he presided. The chairman also selected and served ex officio on more than a dozen subcommittees that undertook investigations.<sup>38</sup>

Dillingham appointed William Husband, former managing editor of the *Montpelier Daily Journal*, as the commission's chief secretary. An ardent restrictionist and Progressive academic who belonged to the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences and the American Statistical Association, Husband acted as the senator's alter ego. Dillingham relied on Husband's expertise at statistical analysis and knowledge of Progressive science, and Husband advised Dillingham on potential methods of restriction.<sup>39</sup>

A nine-member bipartisan commission formed and adopted a research plan to consolidate existing immigration statistics and simultaneously collect sociological data on how and where immigrants lived and worked. Commissioners, social scientists, and a host of federal inspectors were to conduct studies throughout Europe and the United States, applying the methods Dillingham used during his gubernatorial immigration investigation.<sup>40</sup> Standardized questionnaires were the primary research tool, and statistics composed the bulk of the commission's data. The research focused on literacy rates, property ownership, and the number of family groups. The Progressive reformers' penchant for employing the methods of the emerging social sciences and the enlistment of academic experts such as Husband to solve societal problems added a pseudo-scientific dimension to the entire examination.

The first study surveyed emigration conditions in Europe.<sup>41</sup> For three months Dillingham and other commissioners traveled throughout the Continent and found that illiterate and unskilled southern and eastern Europeans constituted the greatest number of emigrants.<sup>42</sup> The tour simply reaffirmed Dillingham's belief in the superiority of northern and western Europeans, and he observed that "the proportion of Scandinavian immigrants, who make admirable citizens, is lower than formerly."<sup>43</sup>

The emphasis on race and ethnicity as the determining factor in the process of assimilation guided the commission's work in compiling a directory of immigrant groups. Upholding contemporary hereditary theories, the directory's system of classification maintained that linguistic and cultural variations signified distinctive racial differences between the people of northwestern Europe and those of southern and eastern Europe. While the directory dismissed southern and eastern Europeans as biologically inferior, it praised Scandinavians as "the purest type"—99 percent Protestant, with the lowest rate of illiteracy—who made "ideal farmers and . . . Americanize more rapidly than other peoples."<sup>44</sup>

Dillingham's long-standing concern over the decline in rural republican virtue and morality led to probes of prostitution, insanity, and poverty among urban immigrants. Each of these studies predictably supported the notion that southern and eastern Europeans made up the largest group that brought the evils of immorality and impoverishment to the republic.<sup>45</sup> The commission cited 1900 census data to show that a majority of northern and western Europeans had taken up farming and concluded it unnecessary to further document their settlement patterns. Pointing to data from agricultural regions devoid of Asians and southern and eastern Europeans, the commission maintained that these were "nonagricultural races."<sup>46</sup>

The bulk of the studies centered on urban immigrant industrial labor, the antithesis of Vermont's husbandry. Over a million questionnaires were distributed in 200 industrial centers to probe the personal habits and living conditions of the urban immigrant proletariat. From the responses, the commission contended that unskilled, illiterate, single male southern and eastern Europeans composed the majority of the nation's urban labor force. The commission held these newcomers culpable for the most acute social and economic problems in the early twentieth century, including the financial panic of 1907. According to the commission, these new arrivals threatened to unravel and transform rural American civilization.

In 1911, after four years of exhaustive study (the findings of which filled forty-one volumes of Senate reports), Dillingham submitted to Congress a list of potential methods to restrict immigration from southern and eastern Europe. Authenticated by Progressive science and justified "by economic, moral, and social considerations," the commission's list of solutions to the "immigration question" began by proposing literacy tests.<sup>47</sup> A second recommendation advocated quotas by national origin to limit "the number of each race arriving each year to a certain percentage."<sup>48</sup> Other suggestions included the exclusion of unskilled workers without wives, an increase in entry fees, and a head tax that would favor men with families.

Consumed by xenophobia in the wake of the commission's findings, Dillingham perceived illiteracy as a contagion and southern and eastern Europeans as its carriers. As president of the board of trustees and chairman of the executive committee of the Montpelier Seminary during the 1910s, Dillingham applied the findings of the commission to the 1911-1912 curriculum by stressing that "no other accomplishment can take the place of the ability to speak and write pure English."<sup>49</sup> In the Senate in 1912 he introduced a bill calling for reading and writing tests as well as increased federal authority to exclude and deport undesirables. Although

Congress passed an amended version of the measure, President William Howard Taft vetoed it, and the House failed to override the veto.<sup>50</sup>

Undeterred by the defeat of his proposal for a literacy test, Dillingham turned to the second recommendation of the commission, racially based national origin quotas. Introduced in June 1913, Dillingham's proposal, the first of its kind in U.S. history, called for limiting immigration to 10 percent of the number of nationals in residence according to the 1910 census. Although the quotas encouraged the immigration of northern and western Europeans, Dillingham predicted that the numbers arriving from southern and eastern Europe would be checked. Congress took no action on the bill.<sup>51</sup>

In 1914, after the adoption of the Seventeenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution requiring direct elections of senators, Dillingham's attention was temporarily drawn away from his restriction campaign to his political campaign in Vermont. His political nemesis, interstate commerce commissioner Charles A. Prouty, who had been an unsuccessful senatorial candidate since 1900, emerged as a powerful contender and posed the first serious challenge to Dillingham's Senate seat. In the fall Prouty opened a spirited campaign waged through newspapers and stump speeches around the state. The challenger garnered the support of several newspapers, including the *Burlington Daily Free Press*. This apparent lead early in the campaign was bolstered in October when the Democratic candidate withdrew from the race, leaving Prouty with the combined backing of the Progressive, Prohibition, and Democratic parties.<sup>52</sup>

Although Prouty attacked Dillingham as an old guard standpatter, he never challenged the incumbent's record on immigration. Prouty shared with Dillingham the assumptions of racial typing and similarly celebrated Anglo-Saxon America. During his campaign Prouty exalted Herbert Spencer, who claimed that America was composed of the greatest hybrid of Anglo-Saxonism; Prouty called Spencer the "greatest speaker who ever expressed himself in the English language."<sup>53</sup>

Dillingham offset Prouty's accusations that he was a pawn of Republican leadership by highlighting his record as an advocate of restriction. During his campaign, managed by William Husband and Fred Howland, a vice president of National Life Insurance Company of Montpelier, the incumbent argued that a change in immigration policy was essential to "permit desirable foreigners to make homes in this country and keep out undesirables."<sup>54</sup> As the election drew closer, Dillingham's stance on restriction became his greatest political asset. In November the election results decisively reaffirmed both Dillingham's place in the Senate (with 56 percent of the vote) and the strength of Vermont's nativist sentiments.<sup>55</sup>

With his return to the Senate, Dillingham again spearheaded the drive

to enact literacy tests, even though numbers arriving on U.S. shores sharply declined during World War I. President Woodrow Wilson's veto of a 1915 literacy test bill that Dillingham sponsored frustrated the senator, and on the Senate floor he expounded on the danger of a nation of cities populated by immigrants. He disdained southern and eastern European newcomers, who ignored "the inducements held out by the farmers of America, [and] in spite of all the advantages the aliens might enjoy in country districts . . . move in racial groups . . . [to] the centers of industry."<sup>56</sup> In 1916 Dillingham declared, "If we adopted the education [literacy] test, it would substantially decrease . . . the races coming here without families . . . [who] will not . . . aid in the agriculture of America."<sup>57</sup>

In January 1917 Dillingham successfully shepherded through the Senate a House bill calling for literacy tests. Although President Wilson again vetoed the measure, the patriotism intensified by the war aroused sentiment in favor of the test, and Congress overrode the veto.<sup>58</sup> Within three years, however, debates over immigration restriction resumed, as many in Congress perceived that the tests failed sufficiently to limit southern and eastern Europeans. Moreover, fears that an urban nation was rapidly supplanting an agrarian republic were confirmed by the 1920 census, which indicated that for the first time more people in the United States lived in cities than in rural areas.<sup>59</sup>

In December 1920 Dillingham resuscitated his proposal for national origin quotas by introducing a bill to limit immigration to 3 percent of the number of each nationality in residence in 1910. Dillingham presented his bill as an alternative to a measure proposed by Republican congressman Albert Johnson of Washington that called for a yearlong suspension of all immigration. Dillingham touted his bill, also a temporary one-year measure, as the means to avoid the return to prewar levels of immigration and to avert the possibility of an oversupply of labor to America's depressed industries. As Dillingham saw it, an immigration emergency "was now at hand."<sup>60</sup>

Dillingham's prominence as a legislative spokesman for restriction led John Spargo to write to the senator in 1921. A former socialist leader who settled in Bennington and would serve as president of the Vermont Historical Society from 1927 to 1939, Spargo expressed a keen interest in thwarting the anti-Semitism that was in ascendance and that he considered to be implicit in Dillingham's bill. Dillingham refused to sign a petition Spargo had sent denouncing anti-Semitism and instead wrote that "the present immigration bill is purely an emergency measure intended to meet the loud demand which comes from every side either for restriction or prohibition."<sup>61</sup> Although he did not sign the petition, he replied to Spargo's inquiries on anti-Semitism by stating that "the prejudice . . .

against those of Hebrew descent is . . . thoughtless and cruel. . . . [They] constitute an element which should be utilized rather than rejected in the development of our Nation."<sup>62</sup>

In May 1921 Dillingham's quotas easily passed in Congress.<sup>63</sup> Dillingham lived to see the renewal of his system of quotas in 1922. After his death in 1923, strong nativist tendencies in Congress prompted the quotas to be reduced to 2 percent of the nationality resident in 1890. Dillingham had brought Vermont's nativist sentiments into play in the formulation of U.S. immigration policy, establishing a pattern of restrictive laws that endured until 1968.

Vermont nativists perceived the transformation of the United States from a homogeneous rural Protestant republic to a culturally heterogeneous urban industrial nation as a loss of virtue. Their alarm mounted as the state experienced a decline in rural population and economic stagnation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Scientific theories abetted nativist assertions, seeming to provide credibility to arguments for immigration restriction. Nativists in Vermont ascribed a loss of American ideals, identity, and status to immigrants and took part in national nativist reactions by striking at what they believed to be the sources of rural decay.

#### NOTES

The author gratefully acknowledges Sam Hand's reading of various drafts of this essay.

<sup>1</sup> Social Darwinism achieved popularity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and provided a basis for the eugenics movement in the United States. See Mark Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1963).

<sup>2</sup> Eric Foner, "The Meaning of Freedom in the Age of Emancipation," *Journal of American History* 81, 2 (September 1994): 446.

<sup>3</sup> Vermont Constitution of 1777, art. 1. This provision was dropped in 1786.

<sup>4</sup> Vermont Constitution, 1828 amendments, art. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Severe cholera epidemics struck the East Coast in 1832, 1849, 1866, and 1892. Alan M. Kraut, *Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes and the "Immigrant Menace"* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 32, 35, 37, 43, 59.

<sup>6</sup> Immigration Regulations, 1849, Manuscript Records of the City of Burlington, Wilbur Collection, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont.

<sup>7</sup> Tyler Gregory Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know-Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 43-44, 153.

<sup>8</sup> T. D. Seymour Bassett, "Urban Penetration of Rural Vermont, 1840-1880" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1952), 361.

<sup>9</sup> "Constitution of the Subordinate Councils of Vermont," *Formulary of the State Council of the American Party of Vermont* (Burlington: Stacy & Jameson, 1855), 11.

<sup>10</sup> Ryland Fletcher, "Circular to the Presidents of the Several Councils Within the Jurisdiction of the State of Vermont," scrapbook 88, Sheldon Museum, Middlebury, Vermont. See "Letter from Lieut. Gove. Fletcher," *Daily Free Press*, 12 July 1855.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> George Perkins Marsh to Erastus Fairbanks, 19 April 1855, doc. box 95, Vermont Historical Society, Montpelier.

<sup>13</sup> George W. Grandey to C. K. Field, 6 February 1857, letter file 857156.1, Sheldon Museum, Middlebury, Vermont.

<sup>14</sup> Donald Bruce Johnson, comp., *National Party Platforms*, vol. 1, 1840–1956 (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1978), 33.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate Immigration Committee, *Immigration Abuses: Remarks of Justin S. Morrill of Vermont in the Senate of the United States December 14, 1887, on His Bill to Regulate Immigration and for Other Purposes* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1887), 4–7.

<sup>16</sup> *Vermont Senate Journal*, 1888, 349–357, 310.

<sup>17</sup> Bureau of the U.S. Census, *1900 Supplement for Vermont*, 568.

<sup>18</sup> *Laws of Vermont: 1888*, 122.

<sup>19</sup> States throughout the union saw immigrants as the solution to labor shortages. In the South during the late nineteenth century, immigrants were employed in work formerly done by slaves. See Rowland T. Berthoff, “Southern Attitudes Towards Immigrants” *Journal of Southern History* 17, 3 (August 1951): 328–350.

<sup>20</sup> *Laws of Vermont: 1888*, 121–122, 60. The statute that created the investigation, Act 110, was entitled “An Act Providing for the Creation of a Commission to Investigate the Agricultural and Manufacturing Interest of the State, and to Devise Means to Develop the Same.”

<sup>21</sup> A. B. Valentine, *Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture and Manufacturing Interest of the State of Vermont* (Rutland: Tuttle, 1890), 15.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>23</sup> Chester Winston Bowie, “Redfield Proctor: A Biography” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1980), 91–94.

<sup>24</sup> *Vermont Senate Journal 1890*, 309–310.

<sup>25</sup> Rowland Robinson, *Vermont: A Study of Independence* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1892), 301–307, 328–330, 365.

<sup>26</sup> Society of Colonial Wars, *Society of Colonial Wars in the State of Vermont: Officers, Committees, and Members* (Burlington: Hobart J. Stanley, 1905), 7.

<sup>27</sup> William Paul Dillingham to Charles Dillingham, 29 December 1896, Dillingham Family Papers, Woodsen Research Center, Fondren Library, Rice University, Houston.

<sup>28</sup> When Dillingham assumed his senatorial seat, Republican senators Nelson W. Aldrich of Rhode Island, Orville H. Platt of Connecticut, William B. Allison of Iowa, and John C. Spooner of Wisconsin—known as “the four”—held the reins of power. See Horace Samuel Merrill and Marion Galbraith Merrill, *The Republican Command 1897–1913* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1971).

<sup>29</sup> *Congressional Directory* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1901), 156.

<sup>30</sup> *Congressional Record*, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 7 January 1902, 35, pt. 1:478.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 9–16 April 1902, 35 pt. 4:3894–3939, 4252.

<sup>32</sup> In the Vermont Senate Dillingham received twenty-four votes, while his challenger, Elisha May, received four. *Vermont Senate Journal*, 1903, 140. In the House the vote was 179 to 42. *Vermont House Journal*, 1903, 60–61.

<sup>33</sup> “An Act to Regulate Immigration of Aliens into the United States,” *Statutes at Large* 30 (1903): 898–911.

<sup>34</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate Immigration Committee, *Information and Display Bureau at Ellis Island*, report 1170 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1904), 1–2.

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate Immigration Committee, *Regulating Immigration of Aliens into the United States*, report 2134 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1904), 5.

<sup>36</sup> *Congressional Record*, 59th Cong., 3d sess., 5 December 1905, 40, pt. 1:101.

<sup>37</sup> Republican representative Charles Henry Grosvenor of Ohio introduced the amendment for a commission. *Ibid.*, 1st sess., 25 June 1906, 40, pt. 10:9166. Roosevelt favored the creation of an immigration commission: “I would want a commission . . . to put before Congress a plan which would amount to a definite solution of this immigration business.” Theodore Roosevelt to Joseph Cannon, 12 January 1907, in Elting E. Morison, ed., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 550.

<sup>38</sup> Minutes of the Meetings of the Immigration Commission, 1907, 18–21, William Walter Husband Collection, Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>39</sup> Catherine Cate Coblentz, “William Walter Husband: Second Assistant Secretary of Labor,” *The Vermonter* 30 (1925): 93–94; Prentiss C. Dodge, comp., *Encyclopedia Vermont Biography* (Burlington: Ullery, 1912), 232–233.

<sup>40</sup> Minutes of the Immigration Commission, 1907, 1–5.

<sup>41</sup> William Paul Dillingham to I. D. Dana, 7 May 1907, Manuscripts File, Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont.

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Congress, Immigration Commission, *Emigration Conditions in Europe* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1911).

<sup>43</sup> “U.S. Senator Dillingham on Tour of Europe,” *New York Times*, 13 August 1907, 13:5.

<sup>44</sup> U.S. Congress, Immigration Commission, *Dictionary of Race and Peoples* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1911), 120.

<sup>45</sup> U.S. Congress, Immigration Commission, *Importation of Women for Immoral Purposes* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1911); U.S. Congress, Immigration Commission, *Immigrants and Insanity* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1911); U.S. Congress, Immigration Commission, *Immigrants as Charity Seekers* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1911).

<sup>46</sup> U.S. Congress, Immigration Commission, *Abstract of the Reports of the Immigration Commission* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1911), 3.

<sup>47</sup> U.S. Congress, Immigration Commission, *Brief Statement of the Conclusions and Recommendations of the Immigration Commission with Views of the Minority* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1911), 48.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 39. Historian John Higham writes that William Walter Husband "claimed to be the originator of the percentage idea." John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925* (New York: Atheneum, 1966), 393-394.

<sup>49</sup> *Montpelier Seminary Bulletin: Catalogue 1911-1912* 1, 2 (May 1911): 30.

<sup>50</sup> *Congressional Record*, 62d Cong., 3d sess., 19 February 1913, 49, pt. 4:3429.

<sup>51</sup> See "U.S. Senator William Paul Dillingham Will Introduce Bill for Regulation of Immigration in U.S.," *New York Times*, 2 June 1913, 2:2. Also see "Plan of Sen. Dillingham, Statistics of Immigration," *New York Times*, 3 June 1913, 8:4.

<sup>52</sup> *Burlington Daily Free Press*, 6 October 1914.

<sup>53</sup> Charles A. Prouty, "Speech Delivered at St. Johnsbury, August 25, 1914," Republican Campaign 1914, Republican Party Memorabilia and Ephemera, box 1 (1860-1938), Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont.

<sup>54</sup> *Burlington Daily Free Press*, 8 October 1914.

<sup>55</sup> Christie Carter, ed., *Vermont Elections, 1789-1989*, State Papers of Vermont, vol. 21 (Montpelier: Secretary of State, 1989), 157.

<sup>56</sup> *Congressional Record*, 63d Cong., 3d sess., 11 February 1915, 52, pt. 4:4092.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 64th Cong., 1st sess., 17 August 1916, 53, pt. 13:12769-12777.

<sup>58</sup> Henry Platt Fairchild, "The Literacy Test and Its Making," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 17 (May 1917): 459.

<sup>59</sup> A city was defined as a center with a population of 2,500 or more.

<sup>60</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate Immigration Committee, *Emergency Immigration Legislation*, 67th Cong., 1st sess., 1920, S. Rept. 17, serial 17, 6.

<sup>61</sup> William Paul Dillingham to John Spargo, 2 May 1921, John Spargo Papers, box 10, Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont.

<sup>62</sup> William Paul Dillingham to John Spargo, 16 December 1920, John Spargo Papers, box 10, Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont.

<sup>63</sup> In the Senate the measure passed 78 to 1, with 17 not voting, and in the House by 216 to 33, with 120 not voting. *Congressional Record*, 67th Cong., 1st sess., 3 May 1921, 61, pt. 1:68, 1442-1443, 13 May 1921, 61, pt. 1: 1442-1443.