



# **At Peace with All Their Neighbors: Catholics and Catholicism in the National Capital, 1787-1860**

*William W. Warner*

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In 1790, two events marked important points in the development of two young American institutions?Congress decided that the new nation's seat of government would be on the banks of the Potomac, and John Carroll of Maryland was consecrated as America's first Catholic bishop. This coincidence of events signalled the unexpectedly important role that Maryland's Catholics, many of them by then fifth- and sixth-generation Americans, were to play in the growth and early government of the national capital. In this book, William W. Warner explores how Maryland's Catholics drew upon their long-standing traditions?advocacy of separation of church and state, a sense of civic duty, and a determination "to live at peace with all their neighbors," in Bishop Carroll's phrase?to take a leading role in the early government, financing, and building of the new capital.

Beginning with brief histories of the area's first Catholic churches and the establishment of Georgetown College, *At Peace with All Their Neighbors* explains the many reasons behind the Protestant majority's acceptance of Catholicism in the national capital in an age often marked by religious intolerance. Shortly after the capital moved from Philadelphia in 1800, Catholics held the principal positions in the city government and were also major landowners, property investors, and bankers. In the decade before the 1844 riots over religious education erupted in Philadelphia, the municipal government of Georgetown gave public funds for a Catholic school and Congress granted land in Washington for a Catholic orphanage.

The book closes with a remarkable account of how the Washington community, Protestants and Catholics alike, withstood the concentrated efforts of the virulently anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic American nativists and the Know-Nothing Party in the last two decades before the Civil War.

This chronicle of Washington's Catholic community and its major contributions to the growth of the nation's capital will be of value for everyone interested in the history of Washington, D.C., Catholic history, and the history of religious toleration in America.

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