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The anti-foreign, anti-Catholic, and anti-immigrant "Native American" political party was formed in 1843. (At the time, the phrase "Native American" referred to people born in the U.S. and NOT to the indigenous people of the country.) William Poole (the basis for the character "William Cutting" in the movie "Gangs of New York") was a member of the New York branch of that organization (which was often called the "Know Nothing" Party). He was also the head of his own West Side gang.

The Native Americans used Poole as their chief "enforcer." As a butcher in real life, Poole (wielding the knife of his trade) could accurately hit a target from 20 feet. He had served an "apprenticeship" with the Bowery Boys, was known to gouge out the eyes of his foes, stood more than six feet and weighed more than 200 pounds.

He, and members of his gang, had special jobs to do for the Nativists on election days: commandeering votes. It is said that they stood outside polling places with bludgeons in their hands. Sometimes they forced people to vote more than once. They sought to elect candidates who would guard against "foreigners" getting jobs they believed should go to native-born Americans.

The Irish-immigrant gangs of Five Points, who owed THEIR allegiance to the Democrats of Tammany Hall, were afraid of Poole. Even the Dead Rabbits (whose chief "slugger" carried a dead rabbit impaled on a pike") avoided him.

The Native Americans likewise targeted Irish immigrants. After a riot in Philadelphia, the July 18, 1844 issue of the *Pennsylvania Freeman* noted:

*The immediate cause of these frightful outbreaks is unquestionably to be attributed to the formation of the Native American Party - a party which should be discountenanced by every friend of human brotherhood...*

*...There will be no safety, no repose, no end to mobocratic excesses, until that party everywhere be resolved into its original elements, and cease to wound the heart and vex the ear of the suffering humanity.*

Although the movie "Gangs of New York" extends his life by eight years, Bill the Butcher was actually killed in 1855.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/BILL-THE-BUTCHER-Gangs-of-New-York>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/BILL-THE-BUTCHER-Gangs-of-New-York>