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LITHUANIANS OF WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS: A SOCIO-HISTORIC GLIMPSE AT MARRIAGE RECORDS, 1910-1915 AND 1930- 1934

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Preface

A small number of sociologists has studied ethnic intermarriages of European stock, employing a variety of research techniques. Drachsler's massive inquiry extended to 64 ethnic groups in New York City for the years 1908 to 1912. Kennedy's probe of New Haven reached from 1870 to 1930 at 30-year intervals, adding the years 1940 and 1950, focusing on seven major communities: Jewish, Italian, British-American, Scandinavian, Polish, German and Irish. Wessel investigated parents of the school children of schools in Woonsocket, Rhode Island in the spring of 1926. In Burlington, Vermont Anderson surveyed all households with a living wife in the mid 1930's. Bugelski checked weddings in Buffalo at ten-year intervals from 1930, with partial scrutiny of the years 1952, 1955 and 1960. Not only has there been diversity in the selection and extent of ethnics and years researched, but also in the manner of gathering and expressing statistics. The lack of clarity among intermarriage studies prompted Besanceney and Redman to offer some cautions to investigators.¹ Given the nature of ethnic combinations possible in a marriage, there are inherent problems of identification and tabulation which may partially account for the paucity of studies along strictly ethnic lines.

One wonders nevertheless about the nuptial experience of little-known minorities such as: Croatian, Latvian, Slovak and Ukrainian. How do they compare with larger immigrations of eastern and southern Europe, and how do they fare in regard to older waves which preceded them such as Germans, Irish and Scandinavian? This is an area which has remained almost entirely unexplored.

The purpose of this paper is to inspect the assimilational experience of one such unpublicized minority, the Lithuanians as they lived in the urban industrial setting of Worcester, Massachusetts by examining marriage records of two multiple-year intervals occurring two and one half decades apart. But since there is so little literature about Lithuanians in the United States, published or unpublished in English, it will be helpful for the reader to have an extended introduction and background of the Lithuanian profile.

Introduction to Lithuanian Sociology

"*The conditions of Lithuanian sociology remain very modest*", wrote Konstantinas G. Čeginskas, author of an encyclopedia article of 1963.² Therein he remarks that the first study, a sociological view of the national renaissance in Lithuania in the late nineteenth century, appeared in 1908 written by Mykolas Roemeris (though he is not even identified as a sociologist in his biographical notice in the same series). Čeginskas concludes his one-column entry with a note of optimism: ". . . at the present time at least, the number of Lithuanian sociologists educated in the West is not that small."³ This closing comment is more wishful thinking than fact. The truth is that there is not even a listing under "sociology" in the new *Encyclopedia Lithuanica*.⁴

On the roster of 107 members of the prestigious Institute of Lithuanian Studies,⁵ only Vytautas Kavolis of Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania and Antanas Musteikis of D'Youville College, Buffalo are listed as sociologists. Benediktas Mačiuika of the University of Connecticut at Storrs is noted as a historian, although he is also a sociologist. A few others such as Vytautas Bagdanavičius, M.I.C., have given intermittent attention to sociological themes. But the writings of these scholars have been oriented more toward topics in the realm of political science and international diplomacy. It appears there is literally no one at present probing Lithuanian immigrants and their descendants in America.

Among unpublished papers, evidently only two writers, both now retired, had prepared doctoral works pertinent to this inquiry. Peter Paul Jonitis authored "The Acculturation of the Lithuanians of Chester, Pennsylvania" (University of Pennsylvania, 1951), 536 pages. Using the questionnaire method in depth, combined with case studies, Jonitis examined 32 residents in eight-hour sessions with each informant, and conducted numerous interviews with other townspeople. His attention to marriage is found in Chapter XIV — "Courtship and Marriage in Chester (pp. 322-349), including one page for the marriage register of the local Lithuanian church.

More relevant is an earlier study of Joseph Bogusas — "The Lithuanian Family in the United States (Fordham University, 1942), 157 pages, specifically Chapter VII on "Intermarriage" (pp. 116-126) and Chapter VIII on "Divorce" (pp. 126-147). Though he does not elaborate on his technique of compilation nor give extensive details. Bogusas does offer traces and patterns of intermarriage.

Thus as to Lithuanian surveys, the cupboard is nearly bare, but as intimated at the outset of this paper, neither are the shelves overstocked with research on other ethnics. As late as 1975, Dinnerstein and Reimers observed that "*Data on intermarriage are not plentiful*. . ."⁶

Lithuanians in America and New England ⁷

In proportion to the total population of Lithuania of some three million around the turn of the century, about one fifth came to America — a proportion surpassed only by the Irish. Precise figures nevertheless are elusive. Immigration officials started a separate entry under "Lithuanians" only in 1899, while the federal census carried such a rubric only from 1910. Living under tsarist rule and heavy Polish influence, Lithuanian immigrants at first invariably indicated "Russia" as their country of origin, and sometimes "Poland". Only gradually did ethnic consciousness manifest itself in the reply of "Lithuania".⁸

The first settlements date about 1868 in the anthracite districts of Pennsylvania, for which agents of mining companies and railroads recruited unskilled Lithuanian laborers at the port of entry in New York City. Soon other colonies emerged in urban centers such as: Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, as well as the New York and New Jersey region. In New England the largest concentrations were in Waterbury, Connecticut, Boston and Worcester, Massachusetts.

Ethnic historians often describe an ethnic community by viewing the four pillars of immigrant life: church, fraternal society, press and school. Lithuanians, the vast majority of whom are of the Roman Catholic Faith,⁹ built eighteen ethnic or "national" parishes in New England from 1894 to 1925 as follows: 10 in Massachusetts, 6 in Connecticut, and one each in New Hampshire and Rhode Island. From the earliest days in the formation of a settlement, priority was given to the erection of a house of worship, though not without intramural conflict, sometimes generating a dissident church ("schismatic" in canonical language), and occasional open clashes with the local Irish bishop.¹⁰ Self-help societies proliferated, with some 100 such fraternal enterprises incorporated in Massachusetts alone, by the end of World War I. This was a figure out of proportion to the number of Lithuanians in the state as compared to other ethnic groups. This multiplication of communal endeavors indicates the strong tendency to organize, alongside the impulse toward independent action — contradictions of the Lithuanian character. Although the centers of journalism were in the areas of New York, Chicago and Pennsylvania, there were several publications originating in New England. Many were of brief lifespan here as elsewhere. Worthy of mention are: *Keleivis* (1905-1979) at South Boston, chiefly of socialist orientation and in the past vehemently anti-religious and anti-clerical, but today mostly a provider of local news; *Amerikos Lietuvis* (1905-1955, with several interruptions) in Worcester, of decided liberal slant; and *Darbininkas* (1915-), started in South Boston, transferred in 1951 to Brooklyn, New York — the voice of Catholic workingmen in its origin, and now a Catholic publication of general interest. In Connecticut at Waterbury was *Rytas* (1896-1898), a newspaper edited and published by Rev. Joseph Zebris.¹¹ Regarding the fourth pillar of ethnic life, the school, Lithuanian accomplishments have been modest in contrast to the zeal displayed by Poles and French-Canadians. The first parochial school was begun in 1905 at Waterbury.¹² Brief efforts were also carried on in New Britain, Connecticut, but without permanent results. Primary schools appeared only later elsewhere as follows: Hartford, 1923; Worcester, 1924; Cambridge, 1926; Providence, 1938. It was not until 1907 that the first Lithuanian sisterhood of St. Casimir was founded at Mt. Carmel, Pennsylvania, and soon transferred to Chicago. The Sisters could never keep up with the demand for teachers, naturally favoring the areas of origin and subsequent location of headquarters.

One of the hopes of Lithuanian immigrants, beyond preservation of their religious heritage in their children, was the desire to inculcate a taste for the language of the homeland, a tongue regarded by many philologists as one of the oldest spoken in the world, and closest to Sanskrit. The function of the parish schools in this regard was a mild success. The American stock did for the most part survive with at least a working knowledge of their parents' speech. Clergy and journalists frequently campaigned for the upkeep of this cultural treasure. Typical of such advocates was Rev. Joseph Žebrius of Waterbury (and later New Britain). *"This question has always been and is now in my heart — to habituate children in the use of the Lithuanian tongue in their lifetime."*¹³ A common filler in the priest's newspaper was the slogan: *"Teach your children Lithuanian."* To a limited degree this language is still in use today for the Liturgy in churches such as: Boston, Lawrence, Worcester and Waterbury.

The same Father Žebrius was the pioneer of the cooperative movement among his countrymen. He opened a parish bakery and parish farm for the benefit of his parishioners. He likewise counseled readers of his newspaper to copy his cooperative ventures, including the local communal grocery stores he inspired. In the food shops which soon opened around New England in each Lithuanian colony, the immigrants could purchase their favorite staples of dark rye bread, sour milk, farmer's cheese, kielbasa and sauerkraut — also popular with the European neighbors such as Germans and Poles. Outside the congested urban ghettos, Lithuanians invariably kept small gardens of flowers and vegetables which supplied produce for canning, along with providing an array of familiar herbs such as: mint, rue and chamomile. In their new surroundings, the immigrants often resumed bee-keeping and raised poultry and cattle.¹⁴ Still, life here was not a simple transplant of the quiet pastoral scenes of the homeland. Early in the history of Lithuanians in America, there was a permanent cleavage which separated the people into churchgoers and freethinkers of socialist bent. The climax came in the breakup of the national alliance (founded in 1886) at the 1901 yearly convention, resulting in two organizations: the catholic and liberal bodies. Apart from these nationwide networks, Lithuanian socialists organized in 1905, and subsequently underwent a split in 1919 when communists gained a majority. Thus there were three basic streams of thought, each with its fervent adherents — catholics, socialists and communists. A fourth group which crossed several lines was the "nationalists" numbering catholics and socialists, a movement which took a neutral stance concerning religion. These four parties had their counterparts in local societies, stamping their imprint on the life of the immigrants. One other major influence must be mentioned, namely, the Polish Independent ("schismatic") Church which broke from the authority of local bishops under Rome, springing up in places such as: Scranton, Chicago and Buffalo. Lithuanians were not immune from asserting their separate religious existence, though the incidence of such "independent" congregations was small.¹⁵ This splinter movement and the trend away from church affiliation all had a bearing on Worcester Lithuanians and their marriage habits.

The Lithuanian Community at Worcester¹⁶

One of the earliest signs of a colony here was 1891 when the St. Casimir Society began. Numbers grew quickly so that by 1894 a parish committee was created, and the next fall a small wooden chapel was built with the consent of Bishop Thomas Beaven of the Springfield diocese to which Worcester belonged. Tragically the first pastor was a man of questionable integrity. Patiently and impatiently the parishioners bore with him, as they issued a stream of complaints to the bishop about the pastor's intemperate habits and loose handling of funds. For some unclear reason, Beaven delayed for a long time before taking action. Finally only in 1908 he forced the resignation of the pastor, and appointed Rev. Julius Radzevičius as successor. The new priest could not cope with the unstable conditions he inherited, and withdrew after only a few months. From 1908 to 1913 Rev. Vincent Bukaveckas (known as "Buchoviecki") held the precarious post of pastor. During his term of office, he witnessed rumblings of dissent, and on one occasion at least had to summon police to quell a rowdy parish meeting. A calming influence came to the community with the coming of Rev. John J. Jakaitis, a more capable and learned clergyman who succeeded Bukaveckas.

But meanwhile the coherence of the settlement dissolved, Separatists became visible, as for instance when a local chapter of socialists banded together in 1901, followed by a lodge of the liberal alliance in 1902. Discontent among the churchgoers led to the calling of a committee in 1908 to design an independent church. By 1910 improvised quarters were hired for religious services, and in 1911 land was purchased for a church and priest's residence.¹⁷ Nevertheless by 1915 the dissident fragment disbanded, after a succession of three "priests" tried their hand at keeping the schism alive. The fact of this All Saints National Church as it was called, had a direct bearing on Lithuanian marriages, as seen in Study I. Finally one observes that after the communist-socialist division in 1919, small but determined chapters of both societies persevered long into the future. For example, as late as 1971 when the communist weekly *Laisvė* celebrated its sixtieth anniversary of publication, eighteen Worcester Lithuanians were listed among the well-wishers, while six were identified as active jubilee promoters.¹⁸

Method

This inquiry encompassed marriages of Worcester Lithuanians for the intervals 1910-1915 and 1930-1934. The goal was to discern evidence of assimilation, and to make comparison with other ethnic groups. The two time-periods are designated as Study I and Study II. Information for the earlier weddings was taken from the registers at the Office of City Clerk. [19](#) The form in use at that time yielded the following valuable data: marriage date, name of spouses, occupations, ages, officiant, remarks (e.g. widowed, divorced). This material was organized by this writer to uncover:

- 1 incidence of extra-ecclesial unions, i.e. ceremonies which, contrary to church discipline, took place before a Justice of the Peace, an "independent" priest, or a clergyman of another denomination;
- 2 cases of inter-marriage, with attention to the stock of the chosen partner;
- 3 numbers of in-marriages with proper ceremonies;
- 4 image of the immigrants as derived from miscellaneous factors of employment, widowhood, mixed residence.

In Study I a total of 663 marriages was discovered as follows:

1910 — 112	1913 — 117
1911 — 124	1914 — 98
1912 — 98	1915 — 114

Identification of names was made on the basis of Lithuanian spellings and grammar, common listing of "Lithuania Russia" as land of origin, and officiant. A check of the spouses' names and officiant easily separated Lithuanians from Poles and Jews who possibly responded "Lithuania Russia" or "Russia" as their birthplace.

The time-span chosen for Study I is significant for several reasons. The schismatic church was functioning from 1910 to 1915, with its potential drawing power on parishioners of the established community of St. Casimir. In addition the years selected were among the highest immigration years when the largest number of couples was likely to be entering marriage. According to one researcher, Lithuanians peaked in 1910 at a figure of 6,000 living in Worcester. [20](#) Finally the drive for restored independence in Lithuania taking place at this time, stirred the brethren here to provide moral and financial support. But these American-based endeavors resulted in separate campaigns by Catholics, nationalists and socialists, thus heightening the immigrants' awareness of their sharp divisions. It is reasonable then to assume that these ideological views would have a bearing on religious nuptial practices.

Study II of this inquiry was an inspection of marriages in the registers of both St. Casimir Church and the later (1925) parish of Our Lady of Vilna (Vilnius) for the interval 1930-1934. The data here differs from that of civil documents. Lacking are "occupation" and "country of origin". While civil weddings cannot be known from church rosters, there were a number of such ceremonies which were subsequently corrected or "validated" in keeping with canonical requirements. This procedure meant a ceremony before an authorized priest. A handful of such validated unions was found. Their significance in mending the "elopement" kind of weddings relates to the assimilational process.

Since by custom and canon, law, a Catholic marriage usually takes place in the church of the bride, Study II concentrates on Lithuanian brides. Grooms who were intermarrying, exchanged vows in the bride's home parish. The combined number of unions at the two Lithuanian parishes of Worcester was as follows:

1930 — 54	1933 — 47
1931 — 47	1934 — 70
1932 — 50	

The early 1930's examined in Study II mark an era when children born of immigrant parents were beginning to enter marriage. Meanwhile when the unfair immigration restriction laws of 1924 went into effect, the Lithuanian federal quota of 382 all but cut off access to America. [21](#) The American-born of Lithuanian stock, usually called the second generation, was beginning to assume a role in society, having had at least a grammar school education, and often a year or two of high school, if not all full four years. Furthermore, a small number became college graduates. These young people had grown up in an environment strikingly different from that of their parents, despite the surroundings of the same neighborhood, parishes, and ethnic societies, all of which were in competition with the inevitable inroads of assimilation. Attention in Study II for the most part was placed on inter-ethnic unions, with reflection on weddings of mixed generation, mixed residence, and elopements which resulted in validations.

Results and Interpretation of Study I

The most drastic withdrawal from one's religious peer group would be to contract marriage in the presence of a minister of another religion. Out of the 663 cases inspected, only one such instance was discovered. A somewhat similar radical

break from one's religious roots would be a ceremony before a Justice of the Peace. There were sixteen marriages of this nature. Also a rebellion against church authority would be a wedding witnessed by one of the "independent" priests of the All Saints Lithuanian National Church (1910-1915). Twenty eight couples pursued this route. The following table shows nuptials from the aspect of church protocol.

TABLE 3

OFFICIANT	NUMBER	SUMMARY	
authorized priest	618	authorized marriages	618
schismatic priest	28	unauthorized	45
Justice of Peace	16	total marriages	663
non-Catholic minister	1	extra-ecclesial unions	6.8%

Thus Lithuanians largely held the line in this essential feature of their religious life by entering marriage through a Catholic ceremony. The low figure of 6.8% of dissident couples is remarkable in view of the ample provocation to go elsewhere, as was furnished by the shaky parish beginnings already described. One might think that couples disgruntled with their ethnic congregation might at least turn to an "Irish" (territorial) parish for their wedding. But there were only ten cases of an Irish priest-officiant, a mere 1.6%. Four of these instances involved an Irish partner, but the remaining six cases which were endogamous Lithuanian unions strongly suggest disgust toward their parish of St. Casimir.

As to the 28 couples willing to assert their independence by going before a schismatic priest, though their number was relatively small, this incidence does indicate a measure of assimilation through severance from the majority of their fellow countrymen. In an earlier example of Providence, Rhode Island where an independent clergyman arrived on the scene prior to the erection of a Roman Catholic parish, it is possible that some of the immigrants in good faith accepted their pastor, unaware of his lack of canonical credentials. In 1910 in Worcester, nevertheless, Lithuanians were often being cautioned by Father Bukaveckas to shun the Rev. Stanley B. Mickevicius (known as "Mickievicz") as a bogus cleric. The 28 couples then represent a clear break from their Catholic household.

As to civil marriages, there was no such choice in the homeland, where all the peasants exchanged vows in accordance with the laws of the Catholic Church. In the New World here in America a civil magistrate provided a possible alternate choice for couples wishing to marry. That sixteen pairs exercised their legal option must be attributed directly to the influence of Lithuanian free-thinkers. The choice of these couples was also a sign of assimilation in its repudiation of the old ways of one's parents' religion — something which could happen in this land of liberty.

Coming to the issue of inter-ethnic or out-marriages, Study I turned up only nine such cases. Among the 663 weddings, five men took non-Lithuanian wives, and four Lithuanian women were wed by members of other ethnic groups. Each union though was strictly of the first generation, i.e. foreign-born. The nine exogamous marriages of the 663 cases amounted to a slight 1.36%. Looking to the study of Bogusas, one finds that in his figures he mingles generations and mixes statistics of five unidentified Lithuanian communities. Still in the absence of any other Lithuanian research, it is worth adverting to excerpts from his data as follows.

TABLE 4

YEAR	MARRIAGES	INTER-ETHNIC MARRIAGES	PERCENTAGE
1900	246	4	1.6
1910	241	8	3.3
1920	334	38	11.3

The figure of 1.36% of out-marriages among Worcester Lithuanians during the 1910-1915 span in comparison with the Bogusas percentages above for 1900 and 1910 shows a remarkably high degree of isolation, or expressed conversely, an unusual degree of ethnic coherence.

Kennedy offers no parallel data, failing to express percentages of out-marriages among first generation ethnics. Drachsler unfortunately omits Lithuanians from his list of 64 varieties in New York City. But he does give a general report that "among persons of the first generation who marry, about 11 per 100 seek mates outside of their group"²², giving figures of 10.39% for men and 10.10% for women. From Drachsler's elaborate charts one can extract data on European groups in proximity to Lithuania as follows:^{22a}

TABLE 5

NATIONALITY	NUMBER OF CASES	NUMBER OF OUT-MARRIAGES	PERCENTAGE
Poles of Austria	4914	615	12.51
Poles of Russia	1873	369	19.70
Slovaks of Hungary	3545	484	13.65

Swedes	1901	506	26.61
Finns	842	137	16.27

The Worcester figure of 1.36% when contrasted with Drachsler's above data is astonishing. Only Jews scored lower with a rate of only .64% for 362 out-marriages among 56,231 studied by Drachsler. The Worcester immigrants then represent a tightly-knit community resisting intensely any mingling through marriage with other stock.

The near total isolation of the Lithuanians can be explained by:

- 1 low economic position in the job market
- 2 widespread illiteracy and the language barrier
- 3 pervasive though inarticulate sense of ethnicity

An economic profile of the Worcester immigrants can be distilled from the marriage registers. Out of the 663 cases, while eight of the grooms were unemployed at the time of marriage, a striking 203 brides (31%) were listed "at home" under the category of "occupation". Described as "*well liked by their employers*"²³ the vast majority of both men and women who did have jobs were members of the unskilled labor pool. Sixty six males called themselves "wire" workers, though others in the same industry no doubt merely listed "laborer" as their means of livelihood. More specific identification is found in a contemporary study²⁴ of Worcester which reported information as of May, 1915. Encompassing 6,000 employees of American Steel & Wire, the data included the three top-ranking ethnic groups as follows: 21.176% Swedes; 14.658% Lithuanians; 12.655% Irish, or slightly over 400 Lithuanians. Others were identified among the workers of the George L. Brownell factory producing twisting machinery.²⁵ A small number of women are included in these figures of mill workers, but the majority toiled as domestics (157 brides gave this occupation) and in various factories, especially the M. J. Whittall manufacturers of carpets, with 35 brides listing carpet work. A small number of men were somewhat above the lowest ranks, being in semi-skilled posts, though the precise degree of ability is not clear. "Machinist" was the designation of 30 males; other categories were: 9 — butchers; 8 — carpenters; 6 each — tailors, cooks and teamsters; 4 — bakers. Perhaps some 10% could be labelled as semi-skilled workers. Evidently then the vast number of Lithuanians were locked into positions of limited income, and so remained for the rest of their working days.

Among the 663 weddings, there were 24 widowers and 16 widows remarrying. In addition to the obvious motive of seeking the blessings of marriage, these second unions suggest the economic need to have a spouse for support, or to care for children — both urgent needs for people among the poor working class. A final indicator of low income level is seen in the preponderance of intracity marriages. Young couples not only almost exclusively married within their own ethnic group, but almost always chose partners from the immediate colony of Worcester. Only 21 spouses were residents outside the city. Small wages inhibited the immigrants' ability to travel and socialize on a wider scale.

A handicap related to the Lithuanians' laboring talent was illiteracy which generally blocked the way to economic upward mobility, and contributed to the cohesiveness of the ethnic household. According to one sourcebook,²⁶ Lithuanians coming to the United States from 1908 to 1914 numbered 129,024. Of the men 42% were totally illiterate, while 54% of the women were so limited. Able to read but not to write were 3% of the men and 5% of the women. This obstacle of illiteracy not only impeded the newcomers from learning better jobs, but influenced their access to citizenship. The low number of naturalized citizens among Worcester Lithuanians suggests an even higher rate of illiteracy than the national average. As late as 1920 there were only 600 who became citizens, a figure comparable to the Finns and Russians, but bettered by the Poles, and clearly surpassed by the Irish, Swedes and French-Canadians.²⁷ Holding little visible political power therefore Lithuanians hardly had access to jobs through political patronage. Extensive illiteracy and failure to pursue citizenship were powerful factors in sealing off the Lithuanians from the community, and thus influenced marriage habits.

The final consideration — the pervasive ethnic sense — is more difficult to assess. There certainly was no strong leadership from the first two pastors of St. Casimir Parish, the center of immigrant life, and probably little wise supervision from the third priest who proved to be transient in his stay. Looking to the laity, one finds only a handful of organizers, principally self-taught, but with scarcely any outstanding figures among them. There were some shopkeepers, but only a few journalists or moulders of public opinion. Another possible index of prominence or at least noteworthy activity would be presence as delegates to conventions of either the catholic or liberal alliances. Yet an inspection of the histories of both national networks reveals only intermittent representation, despite the relatively large settlement of Lithuanians at Worcester.

Even the nomenclature of the spouses in Study I reveals no vigorous ethnic spirit on the part of the parents naming their children at Baptism in the late nineteenth century. While the native-saint "Casimir" appears 33 times among the 663 grooms (only 5.1%) other saints' names predominate. For example, there were 77 by the name of "Jonas" (John), 74 — "Juozas" (Joseph) and 55 — "Antanas" (Anthony). The most popular women's names, none of them specifically patriotic or ethnic, were: "Aniele" (Angela) and variations of "Mary" — choices reflecting the simple catechesis directed to the peasants in their native land. There were as yet no males bearing titles of Lithuania's medieval glorious past such as: Vytautas, Gediminas, Mindaugas, Kęstutis; nor were there any women named for Aldona or Birute. The fixed policy of attaching only a saint's name had been rigidly observed by the parents of the spouses in Study I. Thus in the 1890's when these spouses of the future were born, their fathers and mothers scarcely had any nationalistic aspirations to transmit to their children. Rather there was a strong unspoken consciousness of being Lithuanian among the peasants from the

cultural viewpoint. They had their language, their folksongs, folktales, and customs, both religious and civic. Despite a strong Polish influence in some areas such as Vilnius (Vilna), there was a pronounced ethnic awareness among the majority which underlay their aloofness as seen in the extremely high rate of endogamous marriages.

In addition to judging unions of Study I from the vantagepoint of religion and ethnicity separately, one can further inspect the rate of in-marriages with correct ceremonies — a category employed by Kennedy in her surveys. Combining these two aspects of marriage, we begin with 654 cases in Study I, having dropped the nine out-marriages. Of the 654 weddings, 43 were celebrated with unauthorized officiants from the angle of Catholic Church law. Thus, 611 or 93.42% of the Lithuanian marriages did occur with proper ceremonies. How does this percentage look alongside other ethnic groups? The investigations of Kennedy include three major Catholic communities, although she evidently mixes generations, whereas the 93.42% above for Study I is confined to immigrants of the first generation. Allowing for this slight difference, one notes her statistics for 1900 and 1930. Here one might speculate that the decline of proper ceremonies for in-marriages was evenly spread over the three intervening decades. Thus one might draw up the following chart:[28](#)

TABLE 6				
YEAR	IRISH	ITALIAN	POLISH	WORCESTER LITHUANIANS
1900	93.01	90.93	100.00	
1915*	91.95	85.84	84.92	93.42 (1910 to 1915)
1930	90.90	80.76	69.84	

* This writer's estimate as explained above.

The low percentage of Catholic church weddings for Italians is probably due largely to the anti-clerical attitude of many of these immigrants and their children. The impact of the Polish National ("schismatic") Church is evident in the decline for the otherwise intensely loyal Poles. Allowing for the estimate for 1915 and the mingling of generations in the Kennedy research, one can reasonably conclude that the Lithuanians were approximately as faithful to their Catholic Faith as were the above three ethnic communities.

Judging from their marrying habits, the Worcester Lithuanians sought survival through near universal isolation from the WASP society and the polyglot society in which they found themselves, avoiding weddings with Yankees, Scandinavians, Irish, Italians, Poles and French-Canadians — all of whom were rather numerous in the city. Despite their intramural quarrels and ideological differences, the Lithuanians stayed within the bounds of their ethnic family. Mostly unable to cope with the community at large, nor necessarily strongly desirous to do so, these immigrants found haven in their numerous fraternal cooperatives and their own parish.

Results and Interpretation of Study II

From 1930 to 1934 there were 268 weddings at the two Lithuanian churches of St. Casimir and Our Lady of Vilna. Among these cases were 23 first-generation couples, all in-marriages. Thus this remnant of foreign-born maintained strict ethnic cohesion. The nine inter-ethnic unions of Study I probably resulted at least partially from the lack of suitable partners of one's own ethnic stock. By the 1930's nevertheless there was a greater selection of marriageable Lithuanian women.

In Study II there appears the phenomenon of mixed-generation unions, accounting for 42 cases, all but six being in-marriages.[29](#) Thus, though spouses were willing to cross generations to some extent, they adhered with few exceptions to their ethnic family. Study II figures from the aspect of generation were: 23 — first generation; 42 — mixed generation; 203 — second generation. This last category is the major concern here.

Now ethnic exclusivity shifts suddenly and sharply among the American-born of Lithuanian parentage. Among the 203 cases, there were ten Lithuanian grooms who arranged their ceremony at one of the two ethnic churches. Eliminating these exceptions, one focuses on 193 marriages of second-generation Lithuanian females. From among these instances, there were 90 in-marriages and 103 out-marriages. Thus in-marriages for both sexes of Study I dropped from a very high 98.64% to 46.12% for second-generation females. For comparison we return to Kennedy[30](#) and her findings. In 1930 she noted 2,538 marriages in New Haven, but again without identifying generations. For the seven major ethnic groups she notes the combined rate of in-marriage at 65.80% for that year. To approximate her statistical approach, one might prescind in Study II from specific generations, and calculate the percentage of all 268 marriages. Assessing from this viewpoint, one goes from the 46.12% of solely second-generation Lithuanian females, to a figure of 55.60% for all the 268 cases. For comparison we extract several statistics from Kennedy as follows: 86.71 — Italians; 68.04 — Poles; 33.73 — Scandinavians.

The strong concept of "la famiglia" among the southern Italians helps explain the high figures in that group. The low Scandinavian percentage probably can be accounted for by the older character of the northern immigration, higher literacy rate, and affinity for those of the Anglo-Saxon milieu. The figure for the Poles, while showing persevering ethnic

awareness, indicates the effect of assimilation. The rather low amount for Worcester Lithuanians may be ascribed to the lack of vigorous ethnic leadership, and even a kind of backlash by American-born Lithuanians subconsciously or knowingly rejecting some of their parents' heritage. Drachsler asserts that the single most important factor in assimilation is the failure of the ethnic group to transmit its awareness to the succeeding generation. It seems though that the overpowering element is the total environment constantly clashing with the subculture of the ethnic body. Doubtless the other factors outlined by Drachsler were also operating among the Worcester Lithuanians, namely the conditions of proximity and physical attraction.

An interesting related question surrounding out-marriages is the variety of affinities which come to light. Is there a pattern to exogamous unions? The selection of marital partners accepted by women in Study II was as follows:

TABLE 7

- 30 — Irish
- 23 — French (French-Canadian)
- 19 — Polish
- 14 — Anglo-Saxon
- 8 — Scandinavian (mostly Finnish)
- 3 — Italian
- 6 — uncertain

In the study of Bogusas, three Lithuanian communities in the decade 1930-1940 had 466 out-marriages as follows:[31](#)

TABLE 8												
	I R I S H	P O L I S H	G E R M A N	I T A L I A N	F R E N C H	Y A N K E E	S C A N D I N A V I A N	S L O V A K	R U S S I A N	J E W I S H	o t h e r	
A	38.0	14.6	8.6	18.1	10.2	8.0	3.4		1.1			100%
B	20.3	34.2	12.6	13.2	7.4	6.4	2.7	2.6		0.6		100%
C	20.1	29.8	30.4	11.3	1.2	2.3	2.4	1.4	0.7		0.5	100%
A = 176 unions B = 175 C = 115												

Bogusas' findings and the small survey here in Part II tend to confirm the Kennedy thesis that descendants of immigrants gravitate toward people of their own religion, even when they do not hesitate to cross ethnic barriers. Though there is no historic affinity between them, Lithuanians gave high preference to the Irish when marrying outside their own ranks. The traditional devout Catholicism and the sociability of the Irish probably drew Lithuanians to the Celts, and possibly their mutually heavy drinking habits were a minor influence. The choice of Germans and Poles very likely reflects their position as European neighbors. In their transplanted status here, these two ethnic bodies have shared with Lithuanians some common interests of eating habits, singing, religious customs and their Catholic Faith. Less likely partners for Lithuanians have been people of Protestant background, such as Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians. Especially for religious reasons, intermarriages between Lithuanians and Jews have been least likely. The absence of a German colony in Worcester, and the tight-knit family system of Italians are evident in Table 7. Bogusas' statistics on Lithuanian-Italian weddings surprised this writer. No doubt, a sufficiently established and numerically large Italian community in proximity to a Lithuanian section of a city tends to modify the hold of "la famiglia" on such Italians and their descendants in America.

One other aspect of assimilation was found in Study II, namely 21 "validations" of marriages contracted outside the discipline of the Catholic Church, with the implication of others of unknown numbers which were never corrected, or were corrected elsewhere beyond the two Lithuanian churches of Worcester. Study II reveals the following data:

TABLE 9		
ORIGINAL OFFICIANT	GENERATION	TYPE OF MARRIAGE
11 — Justice of Peace	4 — first	9 — endogamous
5 — Minister	2 — mixed	12 — exogamous
2 — Schismatic priest	15 — second	21 — total validations

Resort to a civil official was often prompted by parental opposition to a union because of youth, lack of financial preparation, and above all a choice of partner outside the ethnic stronghold. Parental resistance was greatest when the

future spouse was neither Lithuanian nor Catholic. Six of the civil ceremonies were in-marriages, and five were out-marriages. The elopement character of most of these marriages is evident in the short time lapse between the civil nuptials and the church validation. In most of these 21 cases, the time element was about a year, and in three instances only a week. Couples had recourse to a civil ceremony as a weapon against their parents and the parish priest to force a proper church ceremony on their reluctant guides. The alternative — to allow the couple to live in sin, was abhorrent to both pastor and parents, and was to be corrected as soon as possible. The two unions entered in the presence of a schismatic clergyman, and subsequently validated indicate that occasionally such couples returned to the Roman Catholic community. Nevertheless such marital partners usually held out to the end in their "independent" nuptials.

Summary and Conclusions

The Lithuanian immigrants of Worcester were remarkably isolated within the confines of their ethnic enclosure, trapped by their lowly economic condition, and impeded from advance in employment by the limitations of illiteracy and the language barrier. They struggled to orient themselves to a totally strange environment in an industrial urban setting of east central New England. Underlying these factors was a marked group cohesion brought along from the rural peasant life of the homeland. The aloof quality of immigrant life reflected itself in the near total resistance to assimilation in relation to marriage habits. This powerful reticence was evidenced in both the high rate of in-marriages and the almost equally high score of marriages within the religious requirements of the Roman Catholic Faith, despite the temporary appearance of a Lithuanian schismatic church. The second generation Lithuanians asserted their independence of the ethnic family when roughly half selected marital partners of other ethnic stock. The American-born further manifested signs of assimilation by entering into a number of extra-ecclesial unions. While a certain percentage of these weddings were validated, there were others which went untouched, as the pastoral experience of any ethnic priest indicates.

From the aspect of research, one clear conclusion of this writer is the need for collaboration between ethnic historians and sociologists investigating intermarriage. Historic perspective and depth can give flesh and blood to cold statistics, and throw light on their interpretation, such as this study has sought to do. How different the Drachsler and Kennedy inquiries might have been if viewed in their historic context.

The second urgent need seems to be a refinement of statistical methods, and some sort of consensus (if such be possible) among investigators as to the most effective techniques of gathering and expressing data. It appears unsatisfactory to lump together generations, and also marriages by sexes. Such blending of figures can mask some significant patterns and variations.

A final recommendation which suggests itself is that some researchers undertake to trace the pathways of marriage of a single ethnic group through various time-periods and a selection of different geographical areas. In this fashion a more accurate analysis of ethnicity and assimilation could be reached.

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8 *ibid.*, wherein Hudson and Shirley, Massachusetts and Waterbury marriage records of Lithuanians are discussed from the viewpoint of ethnic awareness.

9 The only two Protestant groups known in Lithuania were the Lutherans and Calvinists.

10 See this writer's article, "Lithuanian Immigrants and Their Irish Bishops in the Catholic Church of Connecticut, 1893-1915", in *The Other Catholics*, (Arno Press, June, 1978): Part IV.

11 See this writer's paper, "The Impact of a Catholic Newspaper on an Ethnic Community: The Lithuanian Weekly Rytas, 1896-98, Waterbury, Connecticut", delivered April 7, 1978 at the spring meeting of the American Catholic Historical Association, Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey. Father Zebris is the subject of a biography being prepared by this writer at Boston College.

12 The school was staffed by nuns who had fled France during a climate of anti-Catholicism. They were natives of that country.

13 Rytas, Sept. 3, 1896.

14 For a look at a typical small community, see this writer's monograph, *From the Nemunas to the Assabet: A History of Lithuanians and Lithuanian-Americans of Hudson, Massachusetts*, (Hudson, Massachusetts, 1966).

15 Some dozen efforts were made to form such separatist churches among the Lithuanians. They were short-lived usually lasting only a few years. Exceptions have been at Scranton and Lawrence where such congregations have survived to this day.

16 Only scattered and brief notices can be found in Lithuanian sources describing the Worcester colony. The fullest account is found in *Keleivis*, issues no. 46-52, 1959.

17 Land Records, Worcester County, Book 1966: 204-05; Book 2009: 552.

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19 I am grateful to Mr. Joseph O'Keefe and his assistant Ms. Reidy for permitting me to examine the civil registers, despite the limitations of space for such research.

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21 This writer's maternal aunt Eva (youngest female in her family) was a victim of this restrictive legislation, migrating instead in 1929 to Sao Paulo, Brazil where she is still living at this writing.

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28 Ruby Jo Kennedy, "Single or Triple Melting Pot? Intermarriage in New Haven, 1870-1950" *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 58, July, 1952: 52.

29 Each case was that of a Lithuanian bride, with husbands distributed as follows: 4 — Italian; 1 — Irish; 1 — Polish.

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