

Southern New Hampshire University

Immigrant Women in the Making of Irish America

A Walking History Tour

A Capstone Project Submitted to the College of Online and Continuing Education in Partial
Fulfillment of the Master of Arts in History

By

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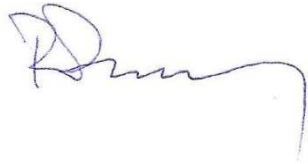
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Abstract

As a result of the Great Hunger, nearly 1.8 million people emigrated from Ireland, and the resultant diaspora changed the face of the great cities where they arrived. The Irish were the first large immigrant group to emigrate to New York, and their arrival challenged the infrastructure and permanently changed the demography of the city. As such, the Irish are integral to immigration studies and New York City history, for they set the stage for the many ethnicities that followed in their footsteps. An important element in immigration studies is the process of assimilation that groups undergo as they transition from the old land to the new. This walking history tour introduces students to the idea of acculturation through the immigrant experience of the Irish Catholic women who emigrated in the middle of the nineteenth century. Through the use of illustrated newspapers, personal correspondence, city directories and bank records students learn of the nativist hostility that the Irish faced, and the strategies that they used to survive in their hostile new world. The tour ultimately exposes that while religious animosity threatened the Irish in America, it was this commitment to religion and to each other that enabled them to not only assimilate, but to thrive in New York.

Dedication

To all of those who helped to make this dream a reality...

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Preface

The following public history project is a walking tour of New York City that traces the path of migration that Irish women took as they struggled to gain a foothold in their new world. The goal of the tour is to bring forth the immigrant women who peopled the city and explore questions posed in *Erin's Daughters in America* by Hasia Diner, first historian to explore assimilation from the female perspective. In her work, Diner posed questions such as: How did women fit into the burgeoning Irish-American communities? What institutions served her? What institutions did she create herself? What was her view of the world? How did the lives of her American-born daughters differ from hers? Examining the social norms of women consequently allows us to better empathize with the family life and struggles of the group. In order to obtain an understanding of the feminine world we must consider how they earned their money, spent their leisure time, set up their homes and raised their children. This tour addresses such matters as it shows that women, as much as men, were the forebears of Irish America and adding their stories reveals the true range and complexity of the group.

The tour begins downtown at the Irish Famine Memorial to commemorate the potato blight which marked the beginning of large scale emigration of Catholics. From there, the tour ventures up to the Five Points, location of modern day City Hall and City Hall Park. Five points was the infamous neighborhood of vice and corruption where the vast majority of Irish lived upon arrival.¹ While the intersection of five streets designated as the “Points” and the corresponding neighborhood no longer exist, the tour will point out the locations of institutions

¹ Tyler Anbinder. *Five Points: The 19th Century New York City Neighborhood That Invented Tap Dance, Stole Elections, and became the World's Most Notorious Slum*. (New York, 2002)

such as the “old Brewery” and the Five Points Mission House. To provide a good understanding of immigrant life, the tour will continue up Mott Street to see old Saint Patrick’s Cathedral, along with typical tenement dwellings. In large part, the success of the group centered upon the church and thusly, old Saint Patrick’s is a good spot to discuss the benevolent work that women undertook. Upon leaving the Five Point’s area, the tour will visit the original building for the Emigrant Savings Bank, an institution created to foster savings and investment for the benefit of the group. From this point, the tour will continue on to new Saint Patrick’s Cathedral, built and ordained by Bishop John Hughes, spiritual leader and advocate for the Irish. This magnificent cathedral signifies the power and wealth of the church, and subsequently the success of the Irish.

Introduction

The Irish in America are everywhere. As a group, their migration began as early as the Revolutionary period, yet with the famine that struck Ireland in the middle of the nineteenth century, the quantity and character of immigrant changed. Due to the Great Hunger, nearly 1.8 million people fled the country, and this mass migration changed not only the face of Ireland, but that of America as well.² The Irish are integral to immigration studies and New York City history for they were the first large immigrant group, and their arrival challenged the infrastructure and permanently changed the demography of the city.³ The Irish stood apart from mainstream society for they remained steadfast to their native heritage and religion, consequently creating animosity and fear among the nativist population.⁴ As a result, the Protestant natives relegated the Irish to the lowest rungs of society, and a period of unrest ensued.

While New York City was a land of opportunity in terms of employment, it was not a friendly and welcoming place to the famine-era Irish. To the minds of the nativist and Protestant populations who dominated the city, the newly arrived Irish Catholic immigrants were a threat to the established order. These religious zealots consequently began a propagandist campaign to malign Catholics and depict them as a dangerous and depraved lot, to be feared by all god-fearing individuals. This movement used propagandist literature to demonstrate the perceived differences between Catholic and Protestant, and show that the poverty and hunger which

² Hasia R. Diner, "The Most Irish City in the Union, the Era of the Great Migration: 1844-1877," in *Making the Irish American*, (2006): 91.

³ Robert Ernst, *Immigrant Life in New York City*, (1949): 63.

⁴ J.J. Lee, "Introduction," in *Making the Irish American*, (2006): 16.

plagued Catholics was due to their inherent decadence and wickedness.⁵ Yet within a decade of their arrival, the Irish achieved social, economic and political success, and held the most powerful positions within the city.⁶

Until recent decades, historiography centered upon the role that Catholic men played as famine immigrants struggled to assimilate into America's largest cities.⁷ As such, historians studied the male church leaders, greedy politicians and the economically disadvantaged as they endeavored to understand the Irish in America.⁸ Yet in many respects, Irish America grew out of the efforts of the young, unmarried women who ventured out alone, without the protection of male family members. Irish women never lost sight of their commitment to home and family, and they tirelessly labored to create an environment for the protection and advancement of future generations.⁹ In effect, women maintained the cultural traits of their life in Ireland, while adopting American ideals in order to steer the Irish up the ladder of economic and social success, and the achievement of the American dream. Manhattan offers an apt backdrop to disprove their negative memorialization and portray the significant role that women played in the making of Irish America.

As the most Irish city in the Union, New York is a microcosm through which to study the experience of Irish Catholic women. Walking their path of migration through the city

⁵ Stephen A. Brighton, "Degrees of Alienation: The Material Evidence of the Irish and Irish American Experience," *Historical Archaeology*, (2008): 134.

⁶ Ronald Bayor and Timothy Meagher, "The Development of an Irish American Community in New York City before the Great Migration," in *The New York Irish*, (1996): 70.

⁷ J.J. Lee, "Introduction," in *Making the Irish American*, (2006): 17.

⁸ David Noel Doyle, "The Remaking of Irish America, 1845-1880," in *Making the Irish American*, (2006): 213.

⁹ Hasia R. Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century*, (1983): XV.

exemplifies the success they achieved for themselves, and the improved circumstances they created for their daughters.¹⁰ In general, women have been an understudied group, and what theories exist have not been tested in the large cities where they lived.¹¹ New York housed the largest and most densely populated Irish community, along with the most advanced network of institutions to serve them and is therefore an apropos setting to study the acculturation process. Traditionally, historians studied Irish America through lenses of military history, political history, religious history or city history, but as women represented the majority of the population, such masculine lenses leave gaping holes in the historiography. An understanding of women is integral for they were responsible for the cultural persistence of the Irish, as it was through the home that Irish American ethnicity developed.

For my public history project I created a walking history tour in New York City to trace the path of the Irish as they worked their way from the bottom rungs of society to a position of success and acceptance. This tour was created to supplement the eleventh grade immigration curriculum set forth by the New York City Department of Education. The NYCDOE curriculum uses the Chinese and Mexican populations to teach this topic, but conversely, this project uses the Irish to explore immigration. By studying immigration history, students will discover the connection between past and present immigration, challenge assumptions and draw new conclusions based upon the evidence presented. In essence, this tour is a study in cultural persistence as it portrays the development of Irish American identity. In looking at the historiography of Irish America, it emerges that until recently scholarship focused solely upon

¹⁰ Hasia R. Diner, "The Most Irish City in the Union, the Era of the Great Migration: 1844-1877," in *The New York Irish*, (2006): 105.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

the politics, employment and corruption of the Irish catholic men while the voices of female immigrants has been lost.¹² When noticed at all, Irish women were seen as an accessory to their male counterparts, with no respect paid to their role in history.¹³

In determining the applicable methodology to substantiate this project, a combination of archaeological artifacts, personal correspondence, 19th century maps, illustrated newspapers, savings bank records and city directories were used to portray a diverse assortment of women, and place them within context of the city. Together these resources allowed me to answer questions such as: Who were the famine-era Irish? Did they assimilate into American culture, or forge ahead with a newly created Irish American ethnic identity? These sources consequently told of the Irish women who achieved personal success, as seen through the economic and social standing they attained during their lifetime.

As the institution with the largest assortment of resources and the broadest reach of audience, the tour will be presented through the New York Public Library. The library first opened its doors more than 150 years ago, and since that time its mission has been to promote engagement and lifelong learning to all patrons at no cost, thereby delivering equal educational opportunities to all. Libraries preserve the collective memory of their community by conserving and sharing materials of social, cultural, political and historic significance.¹⁴ The New York Public Library provides this service to their patrons on a grand scale. This project is well-

¹² Janet Nolan, "Silent Generations: New Voices of Irish America," *American Literary History*, (2005): 595.

¹³ *Ibid.*: 596

¹⁴ "Mission Statement NYPL," *The New York Public Library*, www.nypl.org/help/about-nypl/mission, accessed on February 14, 2018.

aligned with the mission of the library for it shares sources, fosters education, promotes community and embraces the unique history of the city.

Gender and ethnicity are socially relevant topics in American society today, and as such, the study of Irish women is well-suited to the current political climate of New York and the nation. As they had in Ireland, Irish wives and mothers dominated the home, and their values and ambitions paved the way for Irish America. These women upheld their traditional cultural tenets of religion, education and domesticity, while adapting to American cultural norms. It was through this approach that they fostered social mobility and assimilation unheard of for other ethnic groups. By utilizing the vast materials maintained at the New York Public Library, this tour brings forth the Irish Catholic immigrant women who peopled the city to light. The result of this effort is to help high school students see the development of Irish America, and to understand the assimilation process that modern immigrants go through in their journey to become American.

Chapter 1: Historiography

Irish women have customarily figured in our remembrance as either domestic servant, bar maid or poorhouse dweller, but these stereotypes do not take into account the true multiplicity of the group. To the minds of the Protestant and nativist population of the city, the lifestyle of such women was at variance with the manners and values required of civilized society.¹⁵ Such pigeonholing has shaped our remembrance and only recently has scholarship started to focus upon changing these negative connotations. To this end, academics such as Hasia Diner, Janet Nolan and Kerby Miller, concentrated their efforts upon identifying how women impacted the acculturation process and brought their families into the American middle class.¹⁶ Such historians romanticized the young Irish girls who left Ireland for a strange land in order to ensure the welfare of their families, with their heart's desire to have them once again by their sides in America.¹⁷

It is undoubtedly true that the skills learned in domestic service enabled women to instill the American ideals of cleanliness, respectability and domesticity into their own homes.¹⁸ If we are to truly understand who these women were and how they helped to lay the foundation of Irish America, we must delve far deeper though. Many of these women invested their time and money into the creation of societies, schools, hospitals and religious houses to sustain and

¹⁵ Mary E. Daly, "Irish Women and the Diaspora: Why They Matter," in *Women and Irish Diaspora Identities*, (2014): 17.

¹⁶ Hasia R. Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century*, (1983): XIV; Janet Nolan, "Women's Place in the History of the Irish Diaspora: A Snapshot," *Journal of Ethnic History*, (2009): 77; Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, (1986): 55.

¹⁷ J.F. Maguire, *The Irish in America*, (1868): 319.

¹⁸ Margaret Lynch-Brennan, "Was Bridget's Experience Unique?" in the *Irish Bridget*, (2009): 151.

support newer Irish immigrants.¹⁹ As women worked to ensure the survival of family and community, they acted as the foundation upon which Irish America was built, and our remembrance of them must reflect their dedication and strength. Subsequently, looking at Irish American history through a lens of gender studies allows us to create a more objective and accurate picture, and provides us with greater insight into the social and cultural experience of the group.

When studying the process of assimilation, a thorough knowledge of city history is imperative for the story of the Irish and the city were inextricable during the nineteenth century. *Gotham*, by Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace provides a sweeping backdrop for such academic pursuit for it interweaves the economic, political, social and cultural development of the city. This encyclopedic piece of nearly 1400 pages was written to commemorate the centennial of New York City, and through its vivid storytelling it brings the city to life. This book was the result of a twenty year effort and while it is scholarly in content, it is also extremely readable, and applicable to academics and lay people alike. Part four of *Gotham* contains a great deal of information about the turbulent years of the Civil War, a time when the city expanded and changed at an exponential rate. This section describes where women and immigrant groups fit within the burgeoning city and as such, is pertinent to a study of immigrant women.

Actual scholarship around the Irish in America did not begin until the 1920s, when historians acknowledged the importance of the immigrant experience to American history. To

¹⁹ Janet Nolan, "Women's Place in the History of the Irish Diaspora: A Snapshot," *Journal of Ethnic History*, (2009): 77.

effectively research immigration scholars realized they must begin with Irish Catholics, for they were the first substantially different “ethnic” group to arrive. With the 1949 publication of *Immigrant Life in New York City: 1825-1863*, Robert Ernst attempted to shed new light on the famine immigrants and disprove the Protestant depiction of them. To accomplish this, Ernst explored the employment, home life, ethnic identity and assimilation of the Irish in New York.²⁰ This renowned book was the first to challenge the memorialization of the Irish as the depraved and corrupt group who inhabited Five Points, and this shift forever changed the way scholars looked at the subject. Ernst’s methodical and comprehensive analysis of the Irish as they morphed from cellar-dweller in Five Points to political leader of Tammany Hall provides a strong footing upon which to study the Irish. *Five Points: The 19th-Century New York City Neighborhood That Invented Tap Dance, Stole Elections, and Became the World’s Most Notorious Slum*, by Tyler Anbinder, and “Becoming New York: the Five Points Neighborhood,” by Rebecca Yamin, complement Ernst’s work nicely, for together they offer a detailed picture of the living conditions and social experience of life in Five Points.

While immigration studies brought the Irish out of their previous obscurity, real scholarship remained slow to develop. Irish Catholic historiography did not truly began until 1960 with the election of President John F. Kennedy. Kennedy personified the achievement of the American dream for with his election, he took Irish Catholics from poor Famine refugee to powerful political leader.²¹ With the newfound pride that this event created, Irish America looked to forge a collective identity that they could be proud of. Historians thusly turned to

²⁰ Robert Ernst, *Immigrant Life in New York City, 1825-1863* (1949).

²¹ J.J. Lee, “Introduction,” in *Making the Irish American*, (2006): 17.

social history in their efforts to reassess the remembrance of the famine-era immigrants and challenge our collective memory of their immigrant experience.²²

In 1963 William Shannon published *The American Irish*, the first book dedicated solely to the Irish in America. In his work, Shannon looked at the contribution the Irish made to American culture, religion, education, law enforcement and the arts. While the book did not address any of these subjects from a female perspective, the content presents a broad picture of the life experience of the Irish in America. Shannon wrote the piece as a social history, with a strong emphasis upon the bonds that the Irish created allowing them to work together as they struggled to succeed. With the introduction of this book, scholars began to look at the social and cultural aspects of the assimilation process, and new theses were born as academics delved ever more deeply into the topic.

Social history provided the foundation for Irish historiography since the 1980s and furnished the key to understanding their acculturation. The publication of Kerby Miller's *Emigrants and Exiles* in 1985 furthered these efforts for it forced historians to reconsider who Irish Catholic immigrants were, and how they came to be American. This book led scholars to consider the cultural traits and ethnic identity of famine-era immigrants, and disprove the long standing image created by their contemporaries. Miller's research took root in the grounds of Five Points as that neighborhood was the birthplace of the story of the Irish in New York.²³ Through such social histories, historians looked at the Irish Catholic population and the

²² Janet Nolan, "Silent Generations: New Voices of Irish America," *American Literary History* (2005):595.

²³ Rebecca Yamin, "Introduction: Becoming New York: The Five Points Neighborhood," *Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 35, No. 3, (2006): 1.

subculture they constructed within tightknit neighborhoods like Five Points to sustain the group.²⁴ In looking at the process of assimilation through this social framework, the outlines of an Irish American ethnic identity emerged. To further understand the cultural norms and ideals of the group, scholars used artifacts unearthed at archaeological sites in Five Points to reconstruct the community and explore the domesticity that existed there.

In 1992, an archaeological dig in Five Points known as the Foley Square project provided historians with myriad artifacts to aid in their exploration of social history. This excavation helped researchers to depict the Irish as working class individuals trying to survive in new surroundings, and not as the uncultured drunkards of popular memory. Each scholarly paper in this project considered different objects in an effort to explore immigrant life and portray the acculturation process. When taken in conjunction with each other, these papers present a rich picture of the home life and family unit of nineteenth century Irish immigrants.²⁵ These papers are consequently applicable to gender studies, for they explore the domesticity and material culture that existed in the “points;” both of which fell to the realm of women.

In his paper “The Rhetoric of Reform: The Five Points Mission and the Cult of Domesticity,” Robert Fitz used crockery to disprove the theory that the Irish offered no material culture or stable home life to their children.²⁶ Fitz used propagandist literature to explore the myth of Irish depravity and then systematically disproved this image through his findings.

²⁴ David Nolan Doyle, “The Irish in North America, 1776-1845,” In *Making the Irish American* (2006):215.

²⁵ Rebecca Yamin, "Introduction: Becoming New York: The Five Points Neighborhood," *Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 35, No. 3, (2006): 1.

²⁶ Robert Fitts. “The Rhetoric of Reform: The Five Points Missions and the Cult of Domesticity,” *Historical Archaeology* (2001): 115.

Stephen Brighton's piece, "Degrees of Alienation: The Material Evidence of the Irish and Irish American Experience," also strove to refute the propagandist portrayal of Irish Catholics, but did so through the use of medicine bottles. Brighton theorized that the Irish were relegated to the marginalized spaces of society, where they did not have access to the same economic or social opportunities as the nativist and Protestant populations.²⁷ Together these papers portrayed the daily experience of immigrant life in overcrowded neighborhoods which were close to fellow Irishmen, but surrounded by hatred and bigotry. Through the use of material artifacts though, we see individuals who worked together and fostered a unique culture that led them to success, and bound them to their new home land.²⁸

Making the Irish American is a compilation of scholarly essays, selected to challenge the way we think of Irish American history. This informed and well documented book is readable, without sacrificing academic rigor, and is integral as it addresses several gaps in the historiography. *The Columbia Guide* compliments this book, for it offers a detailed chronology of the Irish in America from colonial times to the present in order to depict the development of an Irish American ethnic identity. In this work, Meagher explores subjects such as Irish American gender and family, nationalism, politics and race in an effort to portray the Irish as multifaceted and diverse group. Of particular significance are "the Famine," "the Irish as Immigrant and Exile," and "Irish American Gender and Family," for together these sections connect the Irish to their native heritage and homeland, and explore immigration and assimilation from a female perspective. *The New York Irish* acts to bring the Irish experience in New York

²⁷ Steven A. Brighton. "Degrees of Alienation: The Material Evidence of the Irish and Irish American Experience," (2001): 132.

²⁸ Paul A. Gilge, "The Development of an Irish American Community in New York City before the Great Migration," In *Making the Irish American* (2006):83.

into focus, as it delivers a social history of the Irish within the city. This book is the only piece written about the Irish in New York, and shows the struggles that they faced, the institutions that they created, and the collective personality that evolved. The uniqueness and breadth of information that *The New York Irish* contains make it an essential resource.

As life for Catholics in America grew and flourished under the auspices of the church, religious history played an important part in Irish American assimilation.²⁹ Using the lens of religion shows how animosities of the old world followed the Irish to the new, and created a polarizing effect between Catholic and Protestant.³⁰ As religion acted as a wedge between Protestant and Catholic, it was also a rallying point for Irish Catholics to center upon. Irene Whelan's "Religious Rivalry and the Making of Irish-American Identity," related that religion acted as the bond that connected the Irish in the America with their memories of home, and through this tie Catholics worked together for the benefit of the whole.³¹ Through the lens of religious history, scholars worked to demonstrate that Irish Catholics developed a unique identity that was inextricably intertwined with the Church.³² Catholic immigrants differed from other groups as they did not become American purely through a process of assimilation into American culture. As their Catholicism and ethnicity set them apart and made Protestant institutions

²⁹ Hasia R. Diner, "The Most Irish City in the Union, the Era of the Great Migration: 1844-1877," In *Making the Irish American* (2006): 104.

³⁰ Irene Whelan, "Religious Rivalry and the Making of Irish-American Identity," In *Making the Irish American* (2006):273.

³¹ Hasia R. Diner, "The Most Irish City in the Union, the Era of the Great Migration: 1844-1877," In *Making the Irish American* (2006): 104.

³² Paul A. Gilge, "The Development of an Irish American Community in New York City before the Great Migration," In *Making the Irish American* (2006):83.

inaccessible, they created churches, parochial schools, benevolent societies and hospitals through which to move up the ladders of social and economic success.³³

To religious historians, Bishop John Hughes epitomized the relationship between religion and survival for Catholics. Under his leadership, the church opened and staffed parochial schools and universities whose goal was to provide education without the strain of Protestantism inherent in the public school system. John Hughes was the first to believe that education was the way out of poverty, and he diligently put his theory to the test.³⁴ Along with the educational system that Hughes developed, he also fostered Irish communities replete with orphanages, hospitals, community halls and benevolent societies. In her work, Whelan extolled that the church was the only institution that the Irish could look to for support in New York. Through parish records, schools records and biographies about Hughes life, she presents a self-contained system through which Irish communities flourished. It was via this distinctiveness and self-sufficiency that Irish America grew and flourished in New York. The legacy that Bishop Hughes and the Irish left has benefitted all of Catholic America for the past hundred and fifty years. The beginnings of the Catholic Church and its many institutions are pertinent to a study of Catholicism in America, as much as to the making of Irish America.

The 1970s and 1980s were the first time that historians began to look at the history of Irish America from the perspective of gender studies. In 1983, Hasia Diner published *Erin's Daughters in America*, which explored the unique attributes that differentiated Irish women from

³³ Irene Whelan, "Religious Rivalry and the Making of Irish-American Identity," In *Making the Irish American* (2006):278; Janet Nolan, "Women's Place in the History of the Diaspora: A Snapshot," (2009): 79.

³⁴ Irene Whelan, "Religious Rivalry and the Making of Irish-American Identity," In *Making the Irish American* (2006):278; Hasia R. Diner, "The Most Irish City in the Union, the Era of the Great Migration: 1844-1877," In *Making the Irish American* (2006): 95

their contemporaries in nineteenth century New York. In her work, Diner explained that among the Irish more women emigrated than men, they did so alone, achieved personal success and used that success for the advancement of the group. The thesis of this book is central to the field, and although it presents a cursory overview of the subject, *Erin's Daughters* provides a foundation upon which to build. Janet Nolan quickly followed in Diner's footsteps with her book *Ourselves Alone, Women's Emigration from Ireland, 1885-1920*, where she looked at the lives of unmarried female immigrants in the post famine period. Together, these books show the strength and perseverance that helped women achieve personal success and the dedication that enabled them to promote the advancement of Irish Catholic America. These books represent the earliest scholarly efforts and were the catalyst for other historians to look at female migration. While their efforts were not substantiated with strong evidence, these works opened up new conversations in the field of Irish history.

This new initiative prompted academics such as Mary E. Daly in *Women and Irish Diaspora Identities*, Janet Nolan in "Women's Place in the History of the Irish Diaspora: A Snapshot," and Pauline Jackson in "Women in 19th Century Irish Emigration" to look at women within the context of the diaspora, and consequently to uncover untold truths. This shifting in historiography brought forth the realization that women played an important part in Irish immigration, and inspired scholars to look at the lives of these women in America. Works such as Timothy Meagher's *The Columbia Guide to Irish American History*, Janet Nolan's "Silent Generations: New Voices of Irish America," and Thomas Dublin's "Irish Immigrant Letter, 1847-1848," provided insight into the motivating factors that caused women to leave Ireland, as well as their thoughts, aspirations and goals in America. These writings consequently allow us

to better understand and sympathize with the dilemmas that women faced as they endeavored to survive in a strange new world.

Since its beginnings as an accepted discipline in the 1960s and 1970s, public history has developed a relatively clear definition along with the professional associations, conferences, journals and academic programming characteristic of the field of history.³⁵ Over time, public history emerged with an energy and effervescence as the public increasingly became interested in their collective past. Such increased interest offered public history institutions the opportunity to engage audiences and present them with versions of the past in new and unique ways.³⁶ Walking tours are quite valuable as a public history venue for they allow historians to disseminate information and engage with both history and the audience in uncharted ways.³⁷

When studying immigration and assimilation, particularly in cities replete with immigrant enclaves such as New York, the urban landscape offers the audience the ability visualize and engage with the spaces that made up the immigrant world.³⁸ Walking history tours are particularly applicable for concepts such as identity, for the oral component inherent in this medium allows tour guides to capture listeners with stories which make the past relatable.³⁹ To date, not much work has been done on the history of historic walking tours and the valuable role

³⁵ Michael Kammen, "Public History and National Identity in the United States," *Amerikastudien/ American Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 4, (1999): 459.

³⁶ Ibid: 463.

³⁷ Jay Young, "Stepping into the Past with Historical Walking Tours," *Active History*, <http://activehistory.ca/2013/10/a-step-by-step-guide-to-historical-walking-tours/>, accessed January 23, 2018.

³⁸ Harriet Davis-Kram, "Nontraditional Teaching: Social History in the Streets," *OAH Magazine of History*, Vol. 5, No. 2, *Urban History*, (Fall 1990): 12-13.

³⁹ Jay Young, "Stepping into the Past with Historical Walking Tours," *Active History*, <http://activehistory.ca/2013/10/a-step-by-step-guide-to-historical-walking-tours/>, accessed January 23, 2018.

they play in building the public memory.⁴⁰ Walking history tours have proven beneficial within the urban environment though, and according to Harriet Davis-Kram, historian at Queens College, New York, New York City, historic tours present a magic and dynamism like no other medium.⁴¹ Consequently, while New York City has several challenges in regards to weather, traffic and congestion, as the most Irish city in the union it is the perfect venue to recapture the lost voices of Irish women.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Harriet Davis-Kram, "Nontraditional Teaching: Social History in the Streets," *OAH Magazine of History*, Vol. 5, No. 2, *Urban History*, (Fall 1990): 11.

Chapter 2: Methodology

For historians to work effectively, they must maintain accuracy and objectivity when gathering information from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are vital for such efforts, for they offer a first-hand accounting of the past, and serve as evidence for any conclusions drawn. Primary sources can be interpreted many different way though, depending upon who the historian is, as well as their personal biases, life experiences and skill sets. Secondary sources are quite beneficial as well, for they provide background information and interpretations to compliment scholarly pursuit. When conducting research it is important to bear in mind that sources tell a different story when viewed alongside different materials, and there is not one correct interpretation for a given item. Ultimately, when viewed in conjunction with each other, primary and secondary sources allow historians to gain greater insight into the past, and to bring us ever closer to a true understanding of the events that have shaped our world.

When creating a historic walking tour, it is crucial to not only provide an entertaining experience, but to deliver information that is based upon sound research. To accomplish this, historians must consider a diverse assortment of primary sources along with the physical nature, condition, original purpose and intended use of each, for such data is integral to an objective analysis. Once primary sources have been gathered and assessed, they must be placed within the context of their historic time period. This is where secondary sources come into play, for they deliver a wealth of background information about what was happening at the time, and to whom. While secondary sources provide vital information, there is an inherent risk of subjectivity for each resource. Scholarly papers represent an individual's opinions and consequently, it is

important to be selective when choosing and utilizing such works. When determining the applicability and relevance of each secondary source, it is imperative to look at the thesis and assess the intended purpose of the work, along with each bibliography and index to discover what groundwork the author based their findings upon.

In the many academic institutions of New York, there is a wide dearth of primary and secondary sources to study famine-era immigrant women. To place the plethora of material in context, a broad understanding of what their life was like in Ireland and America is necessary. Secondary sources provide such background information, for there has been much scholarly work surrounding the history of the city, the famine and the Irish within New York. By considering the topic from diverse angles it is possible to visualize the historic, social and cultural influences that impacted them. In such work, it is a best practice to begin scholarly analysis with the broadest lens, that of city history, and create an ever narrowing circle until reaching the most intimate area, the domesticity, occupations and values that made up the feminine world.

Modern scholarship around the Irish in New York has flourished in recent decades, with the opening of multiple institutions centered upon this academic pursuit. These scholarly efforts have looked beyond the flagrancy of Five Points, the political corruption of Tammany Hall or the overbearing Catholicism of the Church.⁴² While historians have started to look at the Irish through a broader lens, the use of gender studies has remained limited. Current debates around Irish immigrant women considered her as little more than the flighty, irresponsible “Bridget,”

⁴² Kevin Kenny, “Taking Care of Irish Culture, Gaelic Gotham: A History of the Irish in New York” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 4, (December, 1997): 819.

who scampered around the house, blundering through her daily chores.⁴³ To present a more accurate portrayal of Irish women, history must look beyond the popular image that has been embedded in our common memory. To achieve this, it is integral to place the lives and experiences of women within the framework of the city, and thereby depict how they impacted the making of Irish America. Historians have not yet studied women in conjunction with or comparison to the larger group, a significant gap to consider and fill.⁴⁴

Previous studies have used sources such as city directories, federal censuses and parish records to comprehend the employment, family unit and neighborhoods where the Irish lived. These studies focused upon immigration and assimilation along male lines though, with no thought to the women of the group, but by incorporating a far wider range of resources the picture can broaden. The methodology used by Marion Casey, renowned scholar of New York City history is an apt model, for in her work for the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, Casey used primary source materials like the Emigrant Savings Bank Test Books, Perris Fire Insurance Maps, city directories and federal census' to produce a factually based, and unbiased portrayal of the immigrant experience. Travelers' accounts, contemporary illustrations and other such primary sources augment such statistical data nicely, for they add color and a visual element to such a project. Together, these mediums depict the propagandist viewpoint held by the nativists, but it is important to challenge this ideal, which can be accomplished through the incorporation of archaeological artifacts and the "American Letter," for these sources portray who women truly were.

⁴³ Margaret Lynch-Brennan, "Ubiquitous Bridget: Irish Women in Domestic Service in America: 1840-1930," in *Making the Irish American*, (2006): 334.

⁴⁴ Kevin Kenny, "Taking Care of Irish Culture, Gaelic Gotham: A History of the Irish in New York" *American Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 4, (December, 1997): 819.

Until the 1960's, the memorialization of the Irish was based upon literature created by the Protestants and nativists who were antagonistic towards them. These contemporary journals, pamphlets and travelers accounts offer a glimpse of life in Five Points, and consequently are pertinent to my project. *American Notes for Grand Circulation* by Charles Dickens, and *How the Other Half Lives* by Jacob Riis, laid the foundation of Irish American historiography, for these detailed works brought forth the poverty, neglect and dissolution of life in the points. Dickens traveled to New York in 1852 to visit the world's most infamous slum, and his colorful descriptions portrayed the neighborhood as a haven of debauchery, depredation and decay. Riis, renowned social reformer, used his photographs to divulge the poor sanitary conditions of the area, and to inspire the city to create positive changes. Collections like *The Old Brewery and the New Mission House at the Five Points*, by the Ladies of the Mission and *Five Points Monthly*, edited by Lewis M. Pease, contrast these accounts for they present the negative opinion that Protestants held for the area and its inhabitants. Each of these accounts are replete with lurid tales and act to capture our imagination and help us understand life in the points.

Nineteenth century maps allow us to better visualize life in the city, for they illustrate the physical and demographic makeup of New York. The Perris-Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, are a series of beautifully illustrated atlases which deliver a great deal of information about each building and its intended use. The maps are organized by city ward and through them, entire neighborhoods come to life. These artifacts offer strong evidence of social values and tight knit communities, for they prove that Irish women lived in close proximity to schools, churches, employment and each other. In addition, the fire maps will form the backdrop upon which to place the homes of Irish families that have women listed as head of household. Doggett's New

York City Directory are integral resources for this task, for they contain familial information such as the age, gender, marital status, education and occupation of each household resident. This information is useful for it illustrates the residential, employment and academic trends that existed. Together, the fire maps and directories offer statistical information about immigrant women's homes and reveal how their family units evolved over time.

The artifacts found on block 160 from the Foley Square Project, an archaeological dig in New York City help us to understand the home life and domestic values of Irish women, and contradict their remembrance as slovenly and unkempt. Objects such as crockery, medicine containers and perfume bottles found there provide scientific data, and offer a direct correlation to the feminine world. Together, these items present a colorful image of Irish women, for they portray the way they decorated their homes, cared for the sick and maintained their appearance. This material culture is important for it allowed the Irish to Americanize at a faster rate than other ethnic groups. Thusly, these objects offer tangible evidence of the home life and domesticity created by women, as well as the blending of Irish culture with American values that was present in their homes.

In 1850, the Irish Emigrant Society created a savings bank to promote economic stability, along with the discipline needed to accumulate wealth.⁴⁵ The Emigrant Savings Bank, as it was dubbed, was a center for the Irish community, for it served thousands of Irish Catholic immigrants between the years of 1850 and 1883. At that time, there was no numeric indicator to confirm an individual's identity, so the bank collected personal and familial information to serve

⁴⁵ Marion R. Casey, "Refractive History: Memory and the Founders of the Emigrant Savings Bank," in *Making the Irish American* (2006): 302.

this purpose. Consequently, the fifty-nine volumes in this collection are one of the best resources in the field of Irish studies. The most applicable to a study of immigrant life are the Test Books, for they share pertinent information about each depositor such as their name, age, residence, occupation, place of birth, and point of emigration. Also significant are the Transfer Books, for they depict the savings and spending patterns of their clientele, and thusly help to understand how women amassed, saved, invested, and spent their money. These records provide concrete evidence about the establishments that Irish women invested in to the benefit of the group, and the future immigration they helped to sustain. Together, the information contained in the Emigrant Savings Bank Test and Transfer Books are significant, for they offer irrefutable proof of the role that Irish women played in the success of Irish America.

The final stage of such work is to gather materials that resonate with the voices of Irish women. While there are scarce letters and memoirs in existence, this type of material is vital, for they show the thoughts, struggles and aspirations that challenged and sustained them. The Irish Emigration Database, created by the Center for Migration Studies in Dublin, Ireland offers the best opportunity for such research, for this database contains hundreds of emigrant letters and diaries. This correspondence is beneficial, for this medium enabled women to share tales about life in America with their family and friends back home. It was also through these letters that women related the opportunities to be found in New York, and urged their family members to emigrate, and capitalize on such advantages. These letters offer a first-hand accounting of immigrant life, and their personal stories give a voice to the young women who ventured forth alone to begin life anew. In the end, by considering female correspondence and images in

conjunction with the statistical information found in the city directories and Emigrant bank records, a new and objective picture of Irish immigrant women comes through.

Chapter 3: Specialized Audience

New York has always been at the heart of the immigration movement in America, as seen through the countless waves of newcomers who have ventured to this hard, but welcoming land for centuries. New Yorkers continue to embrace their ethnic diversity, and it is fitting that the two greatest symbols of immigration live there- the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. Each ethnic group has played a significant role in the development of the institutions, population and cultural identity of the modern day city, and New York therefore represents the greatest opportunity to understand the assimilation process. Over time, each successive group impacted and altered the city's institutions to meet their own demands and needs, and in studying this historical dynamic we can learn a great deal about the contemporary immigrant experience.⁴⁶

While the percentage of foreign born residents has ebbed and flowed, the result of this continuous inflow is that the vast majority of native born New Yorkers have close ties to their own immigrant heritage. The resultant comfort with ethnic diversity has produced a welcoming environment, while building a culture of tolerance that the city looks to promulgate.⁴⁷ Sadly, comorbid with this acceptance lies a faction of bigotry and prejudice, similar to that experienced by each immigrant group that has attempted to make the city its home. By educating secondary school students in immigrant history, we can create empathy in the next generation of adults who will one day inherit the city. The ensuing compassion is increasingly important as the country

⁴⁶ Nancy Foner, "Immigration History and the Remaking of New York," in *New York and Amsterdam*, (2014): 29-30.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*: 33.

grapples with immigration reform policies, for we must remember the inalienable rights guaranteed by our forefathers to all who inhabit the land.

Over the past few decades, the city has once again witnessed a substantial influx of immigrant groups, a phenomenon that harkens back to the second half of the nineteenth century, when newcomers flooded the city's shores. According to 2012-2016 federal census information, 37.2% of individuals living in New York City are of foreign birth, a fact that is mirrored in the population of the country's largest public school system.⁴⁸ As New York continues to uphold its place as the "Gateway City," one of the predominant goals of the New York City Department of Education is to help immigrant youth assimilate and integrate into their new environment. A significant part of this effort is spent helping foreign born and nativist children live together in mutual respect and understanding.⁴⁹ Education is in many respects the means to such an end, for schools represent the institution through which new populations are absorbed and blended into the fabric of the city.⁵⁰

The public school system provides a valuable opportunity to expose youth to the idea of immigration, and instill the broad-minded values necessary for life in such a diverse place. While education does not guarantee such results, the New York City Department of Education⁵¹ endeavors to promote respect for diversity through programs and curriculum focused upon inter-

⁴⁸ Thomas J. Lueck, "Immigrant Enrollment Rises in New York City Schools," *The New York Times*, accessed on February 12, 2018. <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/04/16region/immigrant-enrollment-rises-in-new-york-city-schools.html>.

⁴⁹ Hua-Yu Sebastian Cherng, Joy Sanzone and Roey Ahram, "Demographic Change and Educating Immigrant Youth in New York City," *White Paper Prepared for NYU's Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools Conference on Immigration and Education*, (December 2015): 1-2.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*: 1.

⁵¹ New York City Department of Education

cultural and inter-faith forums.⁵² As the topic of immigration reform takes center stage, the need to teach immigration history becomes increasingly urgent.⁵³ Today's high school students are exposed to the controversies surrounding immigration laws and restrictions on a regular basis, making secondary school an apt venue to provide context and background for the role that immigrants have played in city history. Such information subsequently enables students to explore the ethical questions surrounding identity and belonging, and to draw their own conclusions on the merits of the immigrant population to New York.⁵⁴

The NYCDOE (New York City Department of Education) presents 10 key unifying themes to guide their high school social studies curriculum of which cultural identity, diversity and assimilation are paramount.⁵⁵ During the eleventh grade, students learn about the history and government of the United States from inception through the modern age. Students are introduced to immigration studies in unit 3 of their junior year, as the curriculum addresses the challenges that immigrants faced, the hostilities they confronted, their impact upon New York and their path of migration as they assimilated into the nation.⁵⁶ The eleventh grade is

⁵² "Respect for All," *The New York City Department of Education*, accessed on February 15, 2018, <http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/RespectforAll/EducatorResources/default.htm>. "Supporting all our Students," *The New York City Department of Education*, accessed on February 15, 2018, <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/schools/SupportingAllStudents/EducatorResources.htm>.

⁵³ Dan-el Padilla Peralta, "How to Incorporate Immigration Studies into High School Curriculum," *The New York Times*, accessed on February 8, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/09/12/is-any-immigration-reform-possible-in-this-political-climate/how-to-incorporate-immigration-studies-into-high-school-curriculum>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ "NYC 9-12 Social Studies Scope and Sequence," *The New York City Department of Education*, accessed, accessed on March 2, 2018, http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/A739A67E-6228-4084-99C8-F890617D265B/0/scopeandsequence912_v6_web.pdf.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

consequently an apt time to foster empathy and understanding of the immigrant experience, in the hope that empathy will promote inclusivity and tolerance.

As stated previously, nearly 40% of those residing in New York City are of foreign birth, individuals who hail from more than 188 nations, making the city the most diverse in America.⁵⁷ While this brings challenges to the infrastructure of the city, it also brings great value, for human beings are much improved by contact with those dissimilar to themselves.⁵⁸ It is through such interactions that people's distinct notions and customs are discovered, with personal growth the natural result.⁵⁹ Therefore, it is imperative that the city and the public school system find a way for people with such differing races, religions, cultures, habits and values to live side by side in harmony. The New York Public Library is well-suited to this noble pursuit, for it is the academic institution that unites all New Yorkers, regardless of age, creed or gender.

The New York Public Library first opened its doors more than 150 years ago, and since that time it has provided a welcoming academic environment and acted as a gathering place to city residents. It is the mission of the library to promote engagement and lifelong learning to all patrons at no cost, thereby delivering equal educational opportunities to all. The library embraces the cultural diversity of the city, and endeavors to create programming to educate the public about the rich history, heritage and people of New York. In addition to such scholarly

⁵⁷ Dan-el Padilla Peralta, "How to Incorporate Immigration Studies into High School Curriculum," *The New York Times*, accessed on February 8, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/09/12/is-any--immigration-reform-possible-in-this-political-climate/how-to-incorporate-immigration-studies-into-high-school-curriculum>.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Philippe Legrain, "Learning to Live Together: How to integrate immigrants into society," in *Immigrants*, (2006): 258.

pursuits, NYPL strives to strengthen communities by promoting full citizenship and participation in society. The library achieves this by delivering programs meant to develop key skills and learning strategies to patrons of all abilities.⁶⁰

To date, New York City is home to more than 3 million people born outside of the United States, nearly half of which are non-English speaking individuals.⁶¹ The New York Public Library serves and supports all New Yorkers, endeavors to consistently uphold the ideals of inclusivity and civic-minded behavior.⁶² In these critical times for the immigrant population, NYPL has renewed its mission to welcome all and to provide opportunities to those who need them the most. To achieve this the library offers programs to meet the needs of new immigrants, non-native English speakers and others deficient in the skillset necessary to succeed and contribute to society.⁶³ One way that the library has worked to promote these democratic principles is through their citizenship programs, which have helped more than 5,200 immigrants learn the competencies to become U.S. citizens.

The library holds the second largest public collection in the world with more than 53 million significant materials in its care, and an important part of their mission is to share their rich materials with the world.⁶⁴ NYPL has a wide array of holdings, which they organize into different divisions such as the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, the Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, Rare Books and the Milstein

⁶⁰ “Mission Statement NYPL,” *The New York Public Library*, www.nypl.org/help/about-nypl/mission, accessed on February 14, 2018.

⁶¹ “Libraries Extend Beyond Walls-The New York Public Library,” *The New York Public Library Blog*, www.nypl.org/blog/2017/12/21/libraries-extend-beyond-walls, accessed on February 14, 2018.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ “Mission Statement NYPL,” *The New York Public Library*, www.nypl.org/help/about-nypl/mission, accessed on February 14, 2018.

Division of U.S., Local History and Genealogy. When viewed in conjunction with each other, the items from these areas can be used to produce an objective and engaging picture of immigrant life in the city. Resources like photographs, letters, maps, directories, personal accounts, news sheets, ballads and other such materials are integral to such historic analysis. By adding such primary source materials to the historic tour helps the audience to empathize and engage with the immigrant experience on a personal level.⁶⁵ It is the New York Public Library's mission to preserve the collective memory of New York, provide open access to materials, strengthen communities, and support inclusivity. As such, it is fitting that the library endeavor to create programming to supplement the eleventh grade curriculum of immigration studies within the secondary schools of the city.

In addition to the curriculum standards set forth by NYCDOE, are the college readiness skills believed necessary for future academic success. The skills set forth by NYDOE are in accordance with those set forth by the nation, and include critical thinking skills, synthesizing information, working collaboratively and using creativity. The programming and resources available through public history institutions make them a useful resource to educators as they endeavor to impart these skills to students.⁶⁶ In addition to these skills are the benefit of learning to gather and interpret primary sources when conducting scholarly pursuits.⁶⁷ The New York Public Library is in a unique position to help the department of education meet each of these

⁶⁵ Harriet Davis-Kram, "Nontraditional Teaching: Social History in the Streets," *OAH Magazine of History*, Vol. 5, No. 2, *Urban History*, (Fall, 1990): 13.

⁶⁶ "On the Horizon: Future of Education-Museums and the Future of Education," *The American Alliance of Museums*, accessed on April 4, 2018, www.aam-us.org/docs/default-document-library/on-the-horizon-web-version.pdf?sfvrsn=0.

⁶⁷ "NYC 9-12 Social Studies Scope and Sequence," *The New York City Department of Education*, accessed on March 2, 2018, http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/A739A67E-6228-4084-99C8-F890617D265B/0/scopeandsequence912_v6_web.pdf.

goals, for they possess the mission and materials to supplement curriculum and promote such learning skills. As the library offers all programming at no cost, all school districts regardless of wealth or economic position can take advantage of the benefits offered by this hands on supplement to high school immigration studies.

The American public is increasingly dissatisfied with the formal educational system in the United States, and this feeling has caused educators to look for nontraditional resources to supplement classroom academics.⁶⁸ It is believed that as the public education system transforms itself in the upcoming decades, museums will play an active role in the way educators look to engage and teach students.⁶⁹ Walking tours are an effective way to capture people's imagination for they convey the energy and reality of the past, thereby bringing history to life. Thusly, the information communicated through such projects can challenge misconceptions, and create more realistic viewpoints of particular events or time periods. Over the centuries, New York has welcomed many different ethnic groups, yet it can be difficult for students to understand the sacrifices and struggles endured by the immigrant population. By focusing the tour on the first large immigrant group, the Irish, we can expose students to the hardships endured, and create greater empathy towards the immigrant experience. This tour will portray the Irish immigrant experience in general, yet it will focus upon the lives of women and bring forth their unique contributions to the acculturation process.

⁶⁸ "On the Horizon: Future of Education-Museums and the Future of Education," *The American Alliance of Museums*, accessed on April 4, 2018, www.aam-us.org/docs/default-document-library/on-the-horizon-web-version.pdf?sfvrsn=0.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Chapter 4: A Historic Walking Tour: Women In the Making of Irish America

The content of this walking tour is broken down into two distinct sections, *Historical Research* and *Student Tour Pamphlet*. The first part, *Historical Research* is meant for instructors as it provides the historic background needed to deliver accurate and informative messaging at each location. The second part of the tour, the *Student Tour Pamphlet* provides students with a visual component, and is meant as a supplement to the verbal content of the tour. This pamphlet utilizes diverse primary source materials to help educators portray immigrant life to students. The supplemental document is beneficial to students as they walk the path of the tour and consider ideas such as: why Irish Catholic women came to the United States; what difficulties they encountered with the nativist population in the city; living conditions in the densely populated areas they inhabited; and the institutions they created to ensure the survival of the group.

As the tour incorporates myriad sources it encourages students to think, analyze, draw conclusions and engage with the past as historians; all critical thinking skills necessary for higher academic pursuit. This type of program is deemed highly effective by the American Alliance of Museums, for it ties classroom lessons in with real world experiences.⁷⁰ Ultimately, the tour encourages self-discovery and personal growth as students connect the past to the present and empathize with the issues that have confronted immigrant groups throughout the ages.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Historical Research

The Famine

The Hunger Memorial

North End Avenue & Vesey Street, NY

The potato famine of the 1840s and 1850s changed all aspects of life in Ireland and led to large-scale emigration, with America the final destination of many. Prior to the famine, Ireland was home to more than 8 million people, but the death and migration caused by this catastrophic event depleted the population which has never reached this level again.⁷¹ As the population of the country plummeted, whole classes of society ceased to exist, forever transforming the land tenure system across the nation. Consequently, the famine is the single event that divides the historic timeline of the Irish in Ireland and abroad. As the potato blight changed the nation, it also acted to decrease the opportunities available to women, forcing them to venture outside the safety of their native townland in order to survive.⁷²

Great Britain believed that the blight was caused by overproduction and reliance of a single crop on small parcels of land, and the government enacted new laws to prevent such an occurrence in the future.⁷³ The new regulations impacted inheritance as it disallowed the

⁷¹ Hasia Diner, "The Most Irish City in the Union: the Era of the Great Migration: 1844-1877," in *The New York Irish*, (2006): 105; "Irish Emigrants Leaving Home- the Priest's Blessing," 1851, New York Public Library Digital Collections, Art and Picture Collection, *The New York Public Library*, accessed on March 24, 2018, <http://digitalcollectionsnyppl.org/items/510d47e1-37f2-13d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

⁷² Joseph Lee, "Marriage and Population in Pre-Famine Ireland," *The Economic Historical Review*, (1968): 285.

⁷³ "The eviction: a scene from life in Ireland from the celebrated painting by Powell," 1871, Prints and Photographs Division, *The Library of Congress*, accessed on March 25, 2018, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004669163/>.

subdivision of small farms and specified that only one son could inherit lands.⁷⁴ These laws decreased the number of men who were eligible to marry, subsequently making marriage for the majority of women unattainable. The concurrent introduction of the dowry and arranged marriages further increased the likelihood that poor women would remain unwed. Many women thusly chose to leave for America, for they resented the fact that in Ireland marriage was based upon money, but abroad women married for love and worked for money.⁷⁵ Before the famine, people could marry whom they chose, live off subdivided plots of the familial lands and grow potatoes, such was no longer the case after the famine.

The famine consequently altered patterns of migration, for as the chances of married life deteriorated, emigration rates for single Catholic women increased. In the famine-era, the number of women emigrating between 15 and 19 years of age doubled, while the number of men and children who emigrated fell, signifying that young women were venturing to America alone.⁷⁶ The famine left women in Ireland in a subordinate position, with very few options open to them. For a farmer's daughter, the future promised nothing more than life as an unpaid servant, laborer, nun or unwanted member of her brother's household. For many of these independent minded individuals, such invisible and undesirable options forced them to look elsewhere for the chance of personal freedom and happiness.

While the diaspora led women around the globe, New York City was the final destination for the vast majority.⁷⁷ Manhattan offered women the chance to work at jobs with similar skill

⁷⁴ Joseph Lee, "Marriage and Population in Pre-Famine Ireland," *The Economic Historical Review*, (1968): 285.

⁷⁵ Pauling Jackson, "Women in 19th Century Irish Emigration," *International Migration Review*, (1984): 1010.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*: 1006.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*: 1018.

sets to traditional female occupations in Ireland, with the additional advantage of accumulated wealth and independence. Ultimately, famine migration was the repudiation of the subservient role of women in Ireland, and the opportunity to create lives of their choosing in America.⁷⁸ These spirited and brave women who came to America alone achieved personal success and subsequently acted as the bridge that built Irish America.

Tenement Life in Five Points

The mass migration of nearly 1.8 million people altered not only the face of Ireland, but that of America as well, where the influx of Catholics strained the resources and challenged the infrastructure of the cities where they lived.⁷⁹ The Irish began their journey to America prior to the American Revolution, yet with the potato famine the trickle of immigration became a flood. The earlier Irish immigrants blended easily into the fabric of the budding nation due to their small numbers and shared Protestantism.⁸⁰ Such was not the case for the famine-era refugees, for their Catholicism, rural heritage and extreme poverty caused them to stand apart and at variance with mainstream American society.

From the time when Daniel O’Connell achieved Catholic emancipation in Ireland in 1829 and the ensuing Orange-Green riots that plagued New York, relations between the two religious groups deteriorated.⁸¹ Concurrently with these events was the beginning of a Protestant

⁷⁸ Pauling Jackson, “Women in 19th Century Irish Emigration,” *International Migration Review*, (1984): 1018.

⁷⁹ Hasia R. Diner, “The Most Irish City in the Union, the Era of the Great Migration: 1844-1877, in *Making the Irish American*, (2006): 91.

⁸⁰ David Nolan Doyle, “The Irish in North America, 1776-1845,” in *Making the Irish American*, (2006)

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

evangelical movement which depicted Catholics as a depraved lot whose poverty was God's righteous punishment for their inherent sins.⁸² Thusly, the religious hatred and animosity between the two groups plagued famine-era immigrants and hampered their ability to assimilate. To combat such obstacles, Catholics congregated in the slums of the city, where they created enclaves through which to survive in this hostile new world.⁸³

By 1860, of the 800,000 souls living in Manhattan, 200,000 were natives of Ireland, making the Irish the city's largest immigrant group.⁸⁴ Nativists and Protestants shunned these newcomers out of fear and distrust and created a propagandist campaign meant to malign them and ensure that their criminality, intemperance and debauchery be shunned at all costs.⁸⁵ This negative depiction haunted the Irish and relegated them to the marginalized spaces of society. Such impediments did not prevent the Irish from gaining a foothold in New York though, and within a decade of their arrival they dominated the city through their political, economic and social success.⁸⁶

The mid nineteenth century shaped the destinies of New York, and the Irish within the city. The Irish were important to the history of New York, for their entrance necessitated the

⁸² Joe J. Lee, "Introduction," to *Making the Irish American*, (2006): 16.

⁸³ Paul Gilge, "The Development of an Irish American Community in New York City Before the Great Migration: 1844-1877," in *The New York Irish*, (2006): 83.

⁸⁴ Ibid: 92.

⁸⁵ Stephan A. Brighton, "Degrees of Alienation: The Material Evidence of the Irish and Irish American Experience, 1850-1910," *Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 35, No. 3: (2008): 132; "See Our Torn Flag Waving," 1844, Prints and Photographs Online Catalog, *The Library of Congress*, accessed on March 24, 2018, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008661452>; "Original View of the Old Brewery (site of the Five Points House of Mission," Art and Picture Collection, New York Public Library Digital Collections, *The New York Public Library*, accessed on March 24, 2018, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e0-d839-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

⁸⁶ Hasia R. Diner, "The Most Irish City in the Union, the Era of the Great Migration: 1844-1877, in *Making the Irish American*, (2006): 91.

introduction of a new phenomenon in housing; the tenement house.⁸⁷ Prior to the arrival of the Irish, housing in New York consisted solely of single family residences, located in lower Manhattan. The wealthy of the city saw opportunity in the immigrant population, and when they fled their downtown dwellings for newer housing uptown, their vacated homes became the first multiple family buildings. These once beautifully maintained private homes quickly deteriorated due to the overcrowding and transience of tenement life.⁸⁸ Immigrant neighborhoods flourished in these vacated areas, and tight-knit communities formed around the formal and informal institutions developed there. To their nativist and Protestant antagonists though, such areas were nothing more than dens of vice and corruption, and they set forth to improve upon the imperfect nature of the beast.⁸⁹

Protestant ideology underwent a change in the 19th century as it moved away from the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, and towards a belief in personal choice. According to this new ideal, individuals made conscious decisions to live clean, honest lives or lives of depravity.⁹⁰ For many Protestants, there was a direct correlation between poverty and immorality, both evils which threatened the salvation of “true believers.” As the poorest and dirtiest area of the city, Five Points became synonymous with such ills and Protestant reformers sought to morally cleanse the Irish who lived there.⁹¹ This movement resulted in the “cult of

⁸⁷ Ibid. 88; “A Five Points Lodging Cellar,” Art and Picture Collection, New York Public Library Digital Collections, *The New York Public Library*, accessed on March 24, 2018, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e0-d7e8-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

⁸⁸ Rebecca Yamin, “Introduction: Becoming New York: The Five Points Neighborhood,” *Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (2008): 3-4.

⁸⁹ Stephan A. Brighton, “Degrees of Alienation: the Material Evidence of the Irish and Irish American Experience,” in *Historical Archaeology*, (2008): 134; Robert Fitts, “The Rhetoric of Reform: The Five Points Missions and the Cult of Domesticity,” *Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 35, No. 3, (2001): 115.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Robert Fitts, “The Rhetoric of Reform: The Five Points Missions and the Cult of Domesticity,” *Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 35, No. 3, (2001): 116-117.

domesticity,” the focus of which was the protection of children against the evils of the world. As the rearing of children and the establishment of domestic values were almost completely under feminine control, Irish women felt it was their duty to protect Catholic children against this evangelic movement.⁹² In Ireland, the home was the center and strength of Irish life, and the Irish clung to this cultural norm in America. As the home was the domain of women, the retention of Irish culture fell to their care.

Historiography has traditionally focused upon Catholic men and their impact upon the acculturation process and success of the Irish, yet in many respects, women were the agents of respectability and acceptance.⁹³ Family life and gender roles have largely been understudied, yet placing women within the historiography adds richness to the scholarship, for unlike other ethnic groups, Irish America was a matriarchal, not patriarchal society.⁹⁴ Irish women journeyed to America to build new lives for themselves, and they in turn fostered a stable environment for others to rely upon.⁹⁵ Many of these women worked to create societies, schools, churches, hospitals and benevolent societies to benefit the group and secure their advancement.⁹⁶

Records such as those found in the Emigrant Savings Bank show the financial success of Irish women, and their investment of funds into such institutions, thereby helping the group to prosper. In addition, women sent much of their earnings back to Ireland for the improvement of family farms and the emigration of family members. Consequently, future migration took place

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Hasia Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century*, (1983): XIV-XV.

⁹⁴ Timothy J. Meagher, “Irish American Gender and Family,” in *The Columbia Guide to Irish American History*, (2005): 173.

⁹⁵ Janet Nolan, “Women’s Place in the History of the Diaspora: A Snapshot,” *Journal of Ethnic History*, (2009): 80; Correspondence from Eliza Quin to her parents in Ireland, January 22, 1848, CMSIED 9804816, “Dear Parents,” British Parliamentary Papers, X1, (122), p 128, New York.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

along female lines as women sent letters home extolling the wonderful opportunities that awaited the Irish in America, along with the money needed to make the journey.⁹⁷

Much of the world that Irish women created centered upon neighborhoods such as the Five Points, an area known for its abysmal living conditions and extreme poverty. To the Irish, communities such as at the “Points,” were actually havens where they could support each other as they had in Ireland.⁹⁸ The close proximity of the area allowed them to help each other to survive in the city, while remaining committed to their native heritage and religion. Women were in large part the underpinnings of such communities, and this complex group left a footprint rarely equally by other ethnic groups.⁹⁹

The Basilica of Old Saint Patrick’s

273 Mott Street

The year 2008 saw the 200th anniversary of New York as a diocese, ruled almost completely by an Irish or Irish American clergy. When the diocese celebrated its bicentennial, it was noted that of the eleven bishops and archbishops who have overseen the diocese, only one could not claim Irish descent.¹⁰⁰ In fact, to this day New York remains an Irish ecclesiastical

⁹⁷ Hasia Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century*, (1983): XIV-XV.

⁹⁸ “The Five Points in 1859, view taken from the corner of Worth and Little Water St,” 1859, The New York Public Library Digital Collections, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, Print Collection, *The New York Public Library*, accessed on March 24, 2018, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-f8de-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

⁹⁹ Janet Nolan, “Women’s Place in the History of the Diaspora: A Snapshot,” *Journal of Ethnic History*, (2009): 80.

¹⁰⁰ David Doyle, “Irish diaspora Catholicism in North America,” in *Irish Catholic Identities*, (2013): 214; Thomas Shelley, “Only One Class of People to Draw Upon for Support: Irish Americans and the Archdiocese of New York,” *American Catholic Studies*, Vol. 112, No. ¼, (Spring-Winter 2001): 2.

entity. This Irish domination took root with the city's first archbishop, John Hughes, whose domineering personality would brook no refusal as he fought to make of the city a safe haven for Irish Catholics.¹⁰¹ Hughes was born in County Tyrone and as he emigrated to America as a young child himself, he never forgot his roots. In consequence to his origins, Hughes became a fearless leader at a time when the Irish had none to look to their interests.¹⁰²

When the famine-era Irish arrived, the institutions of mainstream society were closed to them, and the church recognized that group survival could only be achieved through the introduction of alternative institutions for their care and support.¹⁰³ The creation of orphanages, dispensaries, hospitals, shelters, relief organizations, schools and colleges consequently became a top priority to the leaders of the church.¹⁰⁴ In addition to the care and support provided by these institutions was the insurance that Catholics did not fall to the depravity and corruption that Protestants accused them of. Through these efforts, the Irish sustained themselves and fostered a self-assurance that enabled them to not only deflect their negative image, but to create a positive image and assimilate into society.¹⁰⁵

While historians have paid little attention to the role of women in the nineteenth Church, Church sponsored institutions like schools, hospitals and charitable organizations were staffed almost exclusively by women. The division of labor in the Church at this time was quite gendered, and while men ran the parishes, women had control over education and charity.¹⁰⁶ The

¹⁰¹ Thomas Shelley, "Only One Class of People to Draw Upon for Support: Irish Americans and the Archdiocese of New York," *American Catholic Studies*, Vol. 112, No. ¼, (Spring-Winter 2001): 10.

¹⁰² Thomas Shelley, "Only One Class of People to Draw Upon for Support: Irish Americans and the Archdiocese of New York," *American Catholic Studies*, Vol. 112, No. ¼, (Spring-Winter 2001): 7.

¹⁰³ Irene Whelan, "Religious Rivalry and the Making of Irish American Identity," in *Making the Irish American*, (2006): 276.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

most vulnerable members of Catholic society were the incoming immigrants, and their care became the top priority of female members of the Church.¹⁰⁷ Foremost of these charitable institutions were the Sisters of Charity, whose focus was upon the neediest members of Irish America: destitute women and children. The work of this religious order enjoyed phenomenal success, for they shared the same vision as the Archbishop, and their efforts ensured the survival and safety of the vulnerable from the dangers of the city.¹⁰⁸

In 1846, Hughes traveled to Ireland to visit the Mother House of the Sisters of Mercy, and implore them to send a number of their order back to New York with him. Hughes purpose was to provide immigrant women in New York with shelter from the dangers of the urban environment.¹⁰⁹ Hughes believed that the purity and innocence that characterized single, young immigrant women put them at risk of falling into depravity and degradation in America, and he felt the Sisters offered an apt solution.¹¹⁰ While Hughes intention was for the Sisters to protect poor women, they quickly assessed the issues facing not only women, but children as well and they set off to rectify matters.¹¹¹ The Sisters work was all encompassing, for they visited the sick and dying poor in the cellars of the city, the prisoners in the Tombs detention complex, and brought food and clothing to those in need.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Maureen Fitzgerald, "The Perils of Passion and Poverty, Women Religious and the Care of Single Women in New York City, 1845-1890," *U.S. Catholic Historian*, Vol. 10, No. ½, *Women Religious: Historical Explorations* (1991-1992): 46; Ladies of the Mission, Five Points Mission, "The old brewery, and the new mission house at the Five Points," 1854, *Open Library*, accessed on March 24, 2018, <https://archive.org/details/oldbreweryandne00missgoog>.

¹⁰⁸ Irene Whelan, "Religious Rivalry and the Making of Irish American Identity," in *Making the Irish American*, (2006): 276-277.

¹⁰⁹ Edward Rohs and Judith Estrine, "The Sisters of Mercy: A Tale of Two Cities," *Raised by the Church: Growing up in New York City's Catholic Orphanages*, (2012): 27.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*: 28.

¹¹² Maureen Fitzgerald, "The Perils of Passion and Poverty, Women Religious and the Care of Single Women in New York City, 1845-1890," *U.S. Catholic Historian*, Vol. 10, No. ½, *Women Religious: Historical Explorations* (1991-1992): 47-48.

To countermand the efforts of Protestant institutions, the Sisters established orphanages and halfway houses which offered food, shelter, religious education and employment to the Catholic needy.¹¹³ While Hughes and the men of the church often provided the funding for such works, it was religious women who often rescued immigrants from the vagaries of the city. In a world that turned its back upon the poor and fallen, houses like the Sisters of Mercy stood apart for they remained steadfast in their compassion and dedication to the needs of Catholic women and children, regardless of rank or station.

The Emigrant Savings Bank

51 Chambers Street

In 1850, the Irish Emigrant Society opened the doors to the Emigrant Savings Bank, an institution meant to promote savings and stability among the Irish Catholic immigrant population. On the day that Emigrant opened their doors for business, Bishop John Hughes acted as the first depositor when he opened Account No. 9 with \$25.¹¹⁴ With this action, Hughes set an example of thrift that he expected his flock to follow. The bank offered immigrants a safe way to accumulate wealth and to send remittances back to destitute family members in Ireland, thereby acting as the catalyst for further immigration. Through such means, the bank ensured

¹¹³ Ibid; Ladies of the Mission, Five Points Mission, “The old brewery, and the new mission house at the Five Points,” 1854, *Open Library*, accessed on March 24, 2018, <https://archive.org/details/oldbreweryandne00missgoog>; “The Baby Class,” Art and Picture Collection, New York Public Library Digital Collections, *The New York Public Library*, accessed on March 24, 2018; “New York City-Calisthenic Exercises at the Five Points Mission School,” Art and Picture Collection, New York Public Library Digital Collections, *The New York Public Library*, accessed on March 24, 2018, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e0-d83d-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

¹¹⁴ Marion R. Casey, “Refractive History: Memory and the Founders of the Emigrant Savings Bank,” in *Making the Irish American*, (2006): 305.

that what little discretionary income the Irish accumulated was saved and either invested into the Irish in America or sent back to Ireland.¹¹⁵ In the fiscal year that the bank opened, they sent the modern day equivalent of \$4.6 million to Ireland to help those left suffering from the famine.

Within five months of Emigrants opening, Hughes was elevated to become New York City's first Archbishop.¹¹⁶ To Irish Catholics, Hughes rightfully earned his nickname "Dagger John," for he was a formidable leader who had championed their rights to healthcare and education. When Hughes put his mental and physical efforts towards the guiding of the Emigrant Savings Bank, it was safe assured that the masses would follow suit. It was through the agency of the bank that Hughes and the Irish built the institutions needed to care for the Catholic population of the city, which was growing exponentially.¹¹⁷ Through the joint efforts of John Hughes and the founders of the Irish Emigrant Society, Irish Catholics accumulated funds and properties which resulted in a permanent shift in the political power of the city.¹¹⁸

The records of the Emigrant Savings Bank offer us a glimpse into the lives of the Irish, for the bank served thousands of Irish immigrants between 1850 and 1883, and it collected personal and familial data for each depositor. In the 1990s, Emigrants' original building on Chambers Street was saved from demolition and awarded historic landmark status. At that time, the bank records from the nineteenth century were miraculously discovered in the basement of

¹¹⁵ "Irish Depositors of the Emigrant Savings Bank withdrawing money to send to their suffering relatives in the old country," 1857, New York Public Library Digital Collections, Irma and Paul Milstein Division of United States History, Local History and Genealogy, *The New York Public Library*, accessed on March 24, 2018, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/c1437145-3a21-8cf2-e040-e00a180628d4>; "The Emigration Agents' Office-the Passage Money Paid," 1851, New York Public Library Digital Collections, Art and Picture Collection, *The New York Public Library*, accessed on March 24, 2018, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e1-37b7-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 314.

¹¹⁷ Jay P. Dolan, *The Immigrant Church: New York's Irish and German Catholics- 1815-1865*, (1975): 15.

¹¹⁸ Marion R. Casey, "Refractive History: Memory and the Founders of the Emigrant Savings Bank," in *Making the Irish American*, (2006): 316-317.

the building and donated to the New York Public Library. The assembled fifty-nine volumes of records are one of the best sources of genealogical and social history for the study of the Irish in America.

The Emigrant Savings Bank recorded information in the form of Test Books; Signature Books; Index Books; Transfer, Signature and Test Books; and a Deposit and Account Ledger. The Test Books specifically are a significant resource for gathering the personal data necessary to study Irish Catholic immigrants. The Test Books house pertinent information for each account holder such as their name, account number, home residence, occupation, and date of birth. Along with information about the individual, the bank gathered important identifiers like immigration information and the village in Ireland that the depositor emigrated from. The Deposit and Account Ledger supplement these records nicely, for they depict the date and reason for each financial transaction that occurred for a given account. Through these ledgers, historians can understand how the Irish amassed, saved, invested and spent their wealth. Consequently, the Emigrant Test Books and Deposit and Account Ledgers are integral to obtaining an accurate understanding of the role women played in the development of Irish America.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Emigrant Savings Bank Records, *The New York Public Library Archives & Manuscripts*, <http://archives.nypl.org/mss/925#overview>, accessed on March 13, 2018; Correspondence from Martha McCarthy 1850 New York to Family in Ireland, accessed on March 26, 2018, http://tiara.ie/Margaret_McCarthy_Letter.pdf [New York September 22.](#)

A Woman's Work

Lower East Side Tenement Museum

During the Industrial Revolution, the city underwent massive financial growth and in consequence, the demand for female workers greatly exceeded the supply.¹²⁰ The fact that Irish women were native English speakers made them a suitable choice for myriad positions, and they happily stepped in to fill the void. Women went to America to attain a degree of independence unheard of in Ireland, and life in New York provided them with the opportunity to build financially stable lives, regardless of their unmarried status. In addition, the ability to move freely and take advantage of the expanding economy allowed women to follow work where available.¹²¹ As the Industrial Revolution advanced, the city witnessed a concurrent increase in the number of jobs available in the textile industry.¹²² Life for mill workers consisted of long hours in dangerous conditions, but for those willing, such jobs provided a steady income. While this type of work placed Irish women on the lowest rungs of the female job hierarchy, it offered them the ability to care for their families on both sides of the Atlantic.

The widespread prosperity indicative of this era resulted in the development of a wealthy middle class who sought to emulate the domesticity practiced by their counterparts in Victorian England. To achieve this façade of gentility, the newly elite Protestant matriarchs managed large

¹²⁰ Hasia R. Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century*: (1983): XV.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Janet Nolan, "Women's Place in the History of the Diaspora: A Snapshot," *Journal of Ethnic History*, (2009): 78; "New York City directory, 1857," New York Public Library Digital Collections, Art and Picture Collection, *The New York Public Library*, accessed on March 25, 2018, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/6ec37860-52b6-0134-1782-00505686a51c>.

households replete with domestic staff.¹²³ Irish women readily accepted the positions offered as domestics for such jobs provided them income, housing and protection. For many, this was the ideal situation, and girls flocked to the city to obtain work. From first-hand experience as chambermaids, nursemaids, laundresses and cooks, Irish women learned the domestic traits valued by the American middle class.

In some respects, domestic service served as a training ground for immigrant women, for each day they had daily lessons in American cultural norms and ideals. In this setting, Irish women learned how respectable American families behaved, set their table, furnished their homes and educated their children.¹²⁴ While financial constraints prevented many women from transitioning these characteristics directly into their own homes, they made sure to instill such values into their daughters'.¹²⁵ As a result of these efforts, few daughters of domestic workers followed their mothers into service.¹²⁶ Irish women were dedicated to the betterment of their family, and ensured that they provided the education necessary for their children to succeed. This education acted as a trajectory for the group, and by the early 1900s, Irish Catholics exceeded the national average in college attendance and attainment of professional careers.¹²⁷

While Irish mothers drove their children to assimilate into American culture, they made sure they remained true to their Catholicism and Irish heritage as well.¹²⁸ Irish mothers raised their children to be staunchly religious and passionately Irish, while learning the traits needed to

¹²³ Margaret Lynch-Brennan, "Ubiquitous Bridget: Irish Women in Domestic Service in America: 1840-1930," in *Making the Irish American*, (2006): 334.

¹²⁴ Timothy J. Meagher, "Irish American Gender and Family," in *The Columbia Guide to Irish American History*, (2005): 177.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Margaret Lynch-Brennan, "Was Bridget's Experience Unique?" in *The Irish Bridget: Irish Immigrant Women in Domestic Service in America, 1840-1930*, (2009): 156.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid: 157.

acculturate. Irish women were pioneering in the belief that their children could reach the American middle class by embracing American ideals while retaining their elemental Irish ethnicity. The result of their efforts was the development of an Irish American ethnic identity that was both Irish and American.¹²⁹

Saint Patrick's Cathedral

Fifth Avenue between 50th and 51st Streets

From the time of Archbishop Hughes, the terms “New York Catholic” and “New York Irish” have been synonymous with each other.¹³⁰ John Hughes had perhaps more influence over the Catholic population of the city than any man in the history of the church, and as a result he epitomized the relationship between religion and survival for Catholics.¹³¹ While the Catholic Church in New York now encompasses diverse ethnic groups, the Irish have continued to dominate its leadership. Historians like Lawrence McCaffrey extol that Irish domination of the Catholic Church was due to their long history of religious persecution in Ireland.¹³² To combat such animosity in Ireland, Catholics utilized political means to defend their personal interests and those of the Church. Consequently, when the Irish encountered similar bigotry in New York, they had the skillset and experience to combat it.¹³³ The Catholic Church enabled the Irish to

¹²⁹ Margaret Lynch-Brennan, “Ubiquitous Bridget: Irish Women in Domestic Service in America: 1840-1930,” in *Making the Irish American*, (2006): 346.

¹³⁰ Thomas Shelley, “Only One Class of People to Draw Upon for Support: Irish-Americans and the Archdiocese of New York,” *American Catholic Studies*, Vol. 112, No. ¼, (Spring-Winter 2001): 9.

¹³¹ Ibid: 10.

¹³² Ibid: 10.

¹³³ Ibid: 11-12.

transcend their inferior social and economic standing and ultimately thrive against nativist discrimination.

Church history is typically studied from the top down, hence the historical concentration on individuals like Archbishop Hughes. If we are to step back from this traditional historiography, we see the extraordinary monetary and personal contributions of the laity to the Catholic Church.¹³⁴ In spite of their own poverty and responsibilities, the Irish flock consistently made donations to the benefit of the Church, and the establishments that it sponsored. If history has largely ignored the male voices of the parish, it is of little wonder that of the role of women in the Church have been understudied as well. While men like John Hughes were the face of the Catholicism, the institutions he created survived because of the effort put forth by the women who worked tirelessly behind the scenes. In essence, Hughes great missions could not have gone forward without the women who organized and ran the schools and charitable organizations so urgently needed by the newly arrived immigrants. Not only did women invest their time and energy into the church, they also contributed money from their limited income to help sustain the parish and support the community.

In a ceremony at Old Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Archbishop Hughes proposed that "for the glory of Almighty God, for the honor of the Blessed and Immaculate Virgin, for the exaltation of Holy Mother Church, for the dignity of our ancient and glorious Catholic name, to erect a Cathedral in the City of New York that may be worthy of our increasing numbers, intelligence, and wealth as a religious community, and at all events, worthy as a public architectural monument of the present and prospective crowns of the metropolis of the American

¹³⁴ Ibid: 15.

continent.”¹³⁵ Saint Patrick’s Cathedral was originally dubbed as “Hughes Folly,” for its location in the wilderness of uptown New York. As was typical of Hughes, he remained true to his vision to build the most beautiful Gothic Cathedral in what he was confident would one day be the heart of the Manhattan.¹³⁶ Neither the blood shed of the Civil War, nor the violence of the Draft Riots deterred Hughes from his mission, and today this glorious cathedral stands proudly in what did in fact become the heart of the city. The story of Saint Patrick’s Cathedral mirrors that of the Irish in the New York, for it affirms the ascendance of religious freedom and tolerance, just as it shows itself to be the symbol of success for the Irish in America.

¹³⁵ “History and Heritage,” *Saint Patrick’s Cathedral*, <https://saintpatrickscathedral.org/history-heritage>, accessed on March 25, 2018.

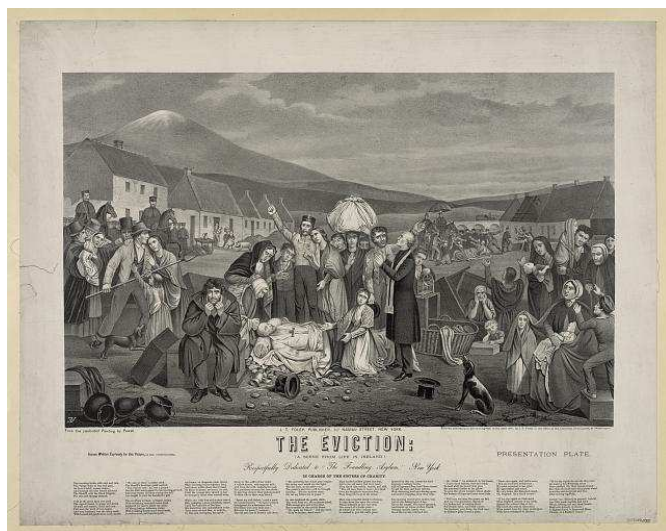
¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

Student Tour Pamphlet

The Famine: The Irish Hunger Memorial

North End Avenue & Vesey Street

The diaspora led the Irish to the four corners of the globe and consequently, monuments to the Irish Famine are located around the world. While these monuments are each unique in their style, they share a descriptive poignancy meant to portray the great suffering of those forced to flee their homeland into what was for many, permanent exile. The Irish Hunger Memorial built in 2002, endeavors to recreate the Irish landscape from which the vast majority of emigrants departed. Artist Brian Tolle built the monument on a quarter of an acre of elevated land, with the skyscrapers of Manhattan as its backdrop on one side, and the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island on the other. The choice of a quarter of an acre was symbolic for during the famine, anyone living on more than a quarter of an acre had to forfeit their land in order to receive government relief. Tolle incorporated a famine-era cottage, stone wall, flora, potato furrows and stones from each county in Ireland to create a scene of nostalgia and longing. Situated as it is among the financial district, and in the shadow of the Freedom Tower, the Irish Hunger Memorial acts to remind us not only of the great hunger experienced by the Irish, but of the hunger that plagues the world today.



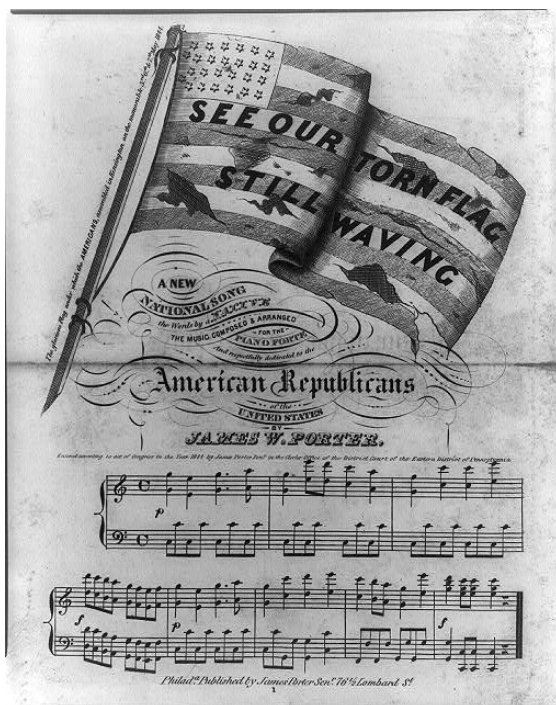
Before the famine, Ireland was home to more than 8 million people, but death and migration depleted the population which has never reached this level again. The famine altered life in Ireland and consequently is the event that divides the historic timeline of the country. Due to changes in land tenure, most women could no longer marry as a result of the famine. Rather than live without the hope of having a family, many women emigrated to the shores of New York alone, without the support of male family members.



Eviction often happened quickly and those being forced to flee their homes did not have time to make preparations. For many, emigration was the only option available to them, and those who left did so under miserable and poverty stricken conditions, knowing they would likely never see Ireland or their kin again. In the famine-era, the number of women emigrating between the ages of 15 to 19 far outnumbered that of men, and for the majority, New York City was their final destination. Manhattan offered women the chance to work at jobs with similar skillsets to traditional female occupations in Ireland, which offered them not only opportunity, but comfort.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ “The eviction: a scene from life in Ireland from the celebrated painting by Powell,” 1871, Prints and Photographs Division, *The Library of Congress*, accessed on March 25, 2018, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004669163/>.

¹³⁸ “Irish Emigrants Leaving Home- the Priest’s Blessing,” 1851, New York Public Library Digital Collections, Art and Picture Collection, *The New York Public Library*, accessed on March 24, 2018, <http://digitalcollectionsnyppl.org/items/510d47e1-37f2-13d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.



This propagandist song was meant to glorify the nativist cause. The American Republicans were an anti-Catholic political party who worked to restrict Irish immigration and the influence of the Catholic Church. One of their main platforms was to prohibit Irish children from obtaining access to the American education system. The tattered American Flag depicted on this song sheet became a popular nativist symbol and this illustration shares that it was “The glorious Flag under which the Americans assembled in Kensington on the memorable 3rd, 6th & 7th May 1844.” On this date nativists were allegedly slain by Irish rioters, and the flag consequently became a symbol of the threat that the Irish posed to the largely protestant public. The animosity that existed between protestant and catholic followed these groups from Ireland to America and this strategy was used to great effect in Ireland. 1641

became a rallying point for Protestants in Ireland, for it was on that date that a series of riots supposedly occurred whereby Catholics massacred hundreds of thousands of Protestants...more than lived in Ireland at the time.¹³⁹

Irish women sent letters home to Ireland that told of the opportunities that existed in the new world as well as their sadness for loss of family and friends. Those who left Ireland did so knowing that they would never return again and their heartfelt letters were the only source of communication with loved ones.

¹³⁹ “See Our Torn Flag Waving,” 1844, Prints and Photographs Online Catalog, *The Library of Congress*, accessed on March 24, 2018, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008661452>.

*“My Dear, I want nothing from you but a few lines for to let me know whether you are living or dead but my dear I know not why sisters have not sisterly love for one another in this country as they do home or what it is that changes you all. I know not but were I in the Indies I would not change. Yes my dear sister I love my sisters as I do my life. I love them more than they do me and I see also that in a foreign home”*¹⁴⁰

This excerpt is from a letter that Catherine FitzGerald, New York City sent to her sister & brother-in-law, Mr. & Mrs. Michael Cahill, Quebec, 12 October 1851 and it shares the sentiment felt by many of her Irish sisters. While Catherine’s new home in America offered her opportunity, it was not without sacrifice, for she dearly missed her sisters and lamented their loss.

The Five Points

Intersection of Worth Street (originally Anthony St.), Baxter Street (originally Orange St.)

And what was Park Street and Cross Street with the public park

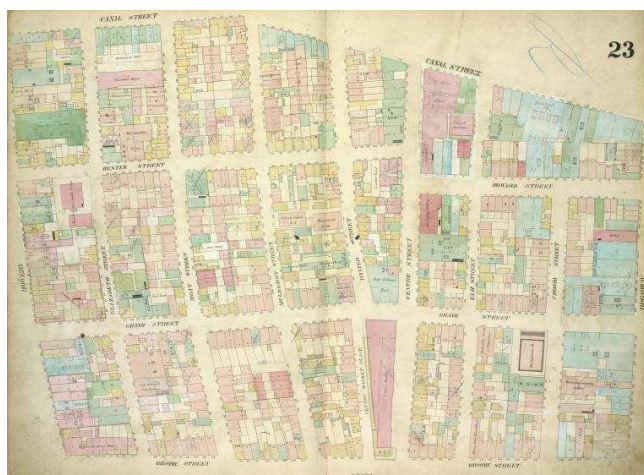
Known as “Paradise Square” on the eastern side

The Five Points have long been remembered as a den of depravity and vice, for the neighborhood was filled with pervasive unemployment, poverty, prostitution and crime. Such was not always the case though. In the early 1800s, the area was a beautiful, middle class community centered upon the Collect Pond. In its day, the pond was a place for recreation such as skating, boating and other leisure-time activities. As time wore on, local businesses like tanneries and slaughterhouses deposited refuse into the pond causing it to be completely contaminated. By 1825, the city was forced to fill in the Collect, and the wealthier inhabitants

¹⁴⁰ Correspondence from Catherine Fitzgerald, 12 October 1851, CMSIED 9511086, Emigrant letters of The Fitzgerald Family, Co.Tipperary, 1829-1907. Copyright reserved by Edwina Goddard.

vacated the area for healthier air uptown. The landfill job to fill in the Collect was a poor one and the seepage from the pond created a swampy, insect infested atmosphere.

The community that now developed there bore little resemblance to its predecessor, for upon departure, the wealthy turned their single family homes into the city's first multiple family dwellings. These buildings quickly fell into disrepair as the hordes of newly arrived immigrants and Blacks overtook the area. Buildings meant for individual families now housed hundreds of inhabitants, and overcrowding and poor sanitation were rampant in the Points. While the area undoubtedly saw great misery and depravation, it also represented the original "American melting pot," for each immigrant group since the Irish have made Five Points their first home. When studying the Five Points and Irish immigration, it is important to keep in mind that our common remembrance was fashioned upon the negative depiction created by the nativists who feared them and were antagonistic to newcomers. Were the area and its inhabitants truly as depraved and amoral as this memorialization suggests though?



This Perris-Sanborn Fire Insurance atlas from 1857-1862 depicts New York City's 6th Ward, the ward which encompassed the Five Points. The fire insurance maps show each building along with its intended use and by looking at this atlas we can see the location of not only houses, churches and schools, but the tanneries and slaughterhouses that they cohabitated with.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ "Plate 23: Map bounded by Canal Street, Broadway, Broome Street, Bowery; Including Hester Street, Howard Street, Grand Street, Elizabeth Street, Mott Street, Mulberry Street, Baxter Street, Centre Market Place, Centre Street, Elm Street, Crosby Street," 1857, New York Public Library Digital Collections, Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, *The New York Public Library*, accessed on March 26, 2018, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-f8de-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

“Poverty, wretchedness, and vice are rife enough where we are going now. This is the place, these narrow ways, diverging to the right and left and reeking every where with dirt and filth... Many of these pigs [wandering the streets foraging for food] live here. Do they ever wonder why their masters walk upright in lieu of going on all-fours? And why they talked instead of grunted?... Here, too, are lanes and alleys, paved with mud knee deep; underground chambers where they dance and game...hideous tenements which take the name from robbery and murder; all that is loathsome, drooping and decay are here.”¹⁴²

Charles Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation* in Two Volumes, Vol 1 (London: Chapman and Hall, 1842). Charles Dickens was the first, and in many ways the most influential chronicler of the Five Points. Dickens visited Five Points, the world’s most notorious slum on his trip to America in 1842. Due to his early years of poverty with his family, Dickens became an outspoken advocate for the movement to reform the housing and sanitary conditions of the poor. In this excerpt, Dickens refers to the human degradation that existed in the area. Dickens work brought the Five Points into the minds of New Yorkers, who subsequently began “slumming trips” to the neighborhood.

¹⁴² Charles Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 1842).



By the 1830s, the “Points” infamous not only through America, but Europe as well and travelers included a stop there for a first-hand view of nations most notorious slum. This tourism increased with the publication of Dickens’ work, and this illustration shows tourists visiting the Five Points for a first-hand glimpse of the poverty and depravity of the area.¹⁴³



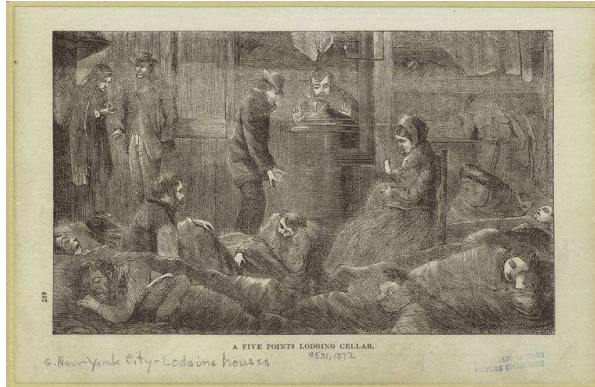
“The Five Points! What does that name import? It is the synonym for ignorance the most entire, for misery the most abject for crime of the darkest dye, for degradation so deep that human nature cannot sink below it....Infancy and childhood, without a mother’s care...woman is there, but she has forgotten how to blush, and she creates oblivion of her innocent children’s home.” *Ladies of the Mission 1845:34-35.*¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ “New York City- Doing the Slums- A Scene in Five Points,” Prints and Photographs Online Catalog, *The Library of Congress*, accessed on March 24, 2018, <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3c22660>.

¹⁴⁴ “Original View of the Old Brewery (site of the Five Points House of Mission,” Art and Picture Collection, New York Public Library Digital Collections, *The New York Public Library*, accessed on March 24, 2018, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e0-d839-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

“Come over here. Step carefully over this baby--it is a baby, spite of its rags and dirt--under these iron bridges called fire-escapes, but loaded down, despite the incessant watchfulness of the firemen, with broken household goods, with wash-tubs and barrels, over which no man could climb from a fire. This gap between dingy brick-walls is the yard. That strip of smoke-colored sky up there is the heaven of these people. Do you wonder the name does not attract them to the churches? That baby's parents live in the

rear tenement here. She is at least as clean as the steps we are now climbing. There are plenty of houses with half a hundred such in.” *Jacob Riis, How the Other Half Lives*¹⁴⁵



This illustration of the Five Points in 1859 portrays a very different image of the neighborhood from that of popular memory. Illustrations such as this challenge our remembrance and force us to consider that more than just crime, poverty and prostitution existed in the Points. In addition to the ills inherent in any poor area, the neighborhood was also a working class community peopled with immigrants working hard to make a better

lives for themselves and their families.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ “A Five Points Lodging Cellar,” Art and Picture Collection, New York Public Library Digital Collections, *The New York Public Library*, accessed on March 24, 2018, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e0-d7e8-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

¹⁴⁶ “The Five Points in 1859, view taken from the corner of Worth and Little Water St,” 1859, The New York Public Library Digital Collections, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, Print Collection, *The New York Public Library*, accessed on March 24, 2018, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-f8de-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

“Give my love to Maraget and Ann and Mary i wish you to keep them at scholl if you possible Give my best respects to all friends and inquiring neighbours i dont wish you to part your property for some time to i send you more account i am verry glad for leaving there and coming to this Country this is the best County”¹⁴⁷

While New York may not have always been an easy or welcoming place, Eliza Quin’s letter from 1848 shows that although she misses friends and family in Ireland, she is very happy with her new home in New York. This sentiment is pervasive through the many letters that Irish women sent home, for rather than returning to those they loved in Ireland, they consistently urged family to join them in America.

Conversely, New York did not always offer the same opportunities to Irish men as it did women. In the following letter from Charlotte Graham to her father in Ireland, she relates the difficulty that rural farmers had of finding work and opportunity in America.

“This Country is not So good for labouring men as it has been there is Such a Multitude Coming from all Sorts There was a Ship Left New York about a week ago with Emigrants for their native Land they had been here about Six Months. any one [anyone?] that Can Do Milking at Home had better stay there. i hear a great many say they were Sorry Ever they Came here.

William has thought this Many a Year he would Go Once More to See Old Ireland he says if all Things do as he Expects this Winter he Hopes to See You all next Summer but he never shall go with my Consent there is so much Danger, if he goes he will Take Robert And Send him to Schooll [School?], i hope he will give it up.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Correspondence from Eliza Quin to her parents in Ireland, January 22, 1848, CMSIED 9804816, “Dear Parents,” British Parliamentary Papers, X1, (122), p 128, New York.

¹⁴⁸ Correspondence from Charlotte Graham to her father James McBride and her sister in Dunmurry, County Antrim, November 16, 1849, PRONI T 2613/16 CMSIED 9007110.



The old brewery, and the new mission house at the Five Points
Five Points Mission (New York, N.Y.)

Protestant missionaries believed that Irish Catholics lived amoral lives, without the cultural domesticity characteristic of the Protestant “worth poor.” This illustration, *The Dying Mother*, contradicts such beliefs for upon close inspection we see a strong material culture. In this piece, the mother lies dying in bed, with a crucifix on the wall, surrounded by her family. When looking at the items of her poor, but relatively tidy room, we see wood furniture, wall hangings, an attractive quilt and her children’s toys. In addition to the room furnishings, the children are all dressed neatly and adequately, which suggests that they are well-cared for. When considered in conjunction, this illustration shows that the family has adopted well to their new country and has incorporated the middle-class American ideals of domesticity then current in the city.¹⁴⁹

In the early 1990s, a series of archaeological digs occurred in the area that had once been the Five Points. The Foley Square Project, to which these digs were a part, provided historians with the opportunity to investigate life in the 19th century, a period that was transformative in the history of the city. Scholars utilized this new evidence in an effort to understand the social history of the Irish through a more scientific approach. The archaeological excavation of the area portrayed the day-to-day home life for the individuals who lived in this densely crowded neighborhood. In their analysis, scholars placed these artifacts within historical context to gain an accurate picture of where Five Points, and the Irish, fit into the city. Their findings show the Irish as immigrants who struggled to attain respectability and stability in a challenging new environment.

¹⁴⁹ Ladies of the Mission, Five Points Mission, “The old brewery, and the new mission house at the Five Points,” 1854, *Open Library*, accessed on March 24, 2018, <https://archive.org/details/oldbreweryandne00missgoog>.

During the 19th century, home and family fell to the realm of women, so the findings from this project provide a direct correlation to the feminine world. The artifacts unearthed such as crockery depict the way women decorated their homes, medicine bottles portray the medical care they gave to the sick and perfume bottles show the attention they paid to their appearance. Together these findings are irrefutable evidence of the Irish American culture that women fostered. The findings for the Foley Square project are housed at the Library of Congress and are only available for onsite research.

The Basilica of Old Saint Patrick's Cathedral

273 Mott Street

The year 2008 saw the 200th anniversary of Old Saint Patrick's Cathedral and New York as a diocese. Located in the heart of the old city, Old Saint Patrick's was the first Cathedral for the Archdiocese of New York. The Church, through the auspices of John Hughes, first Archbishop of New York, acted as a beacon of hope for the masses of Irish immigrants who peopled his parish. The Irish flocked to the church for the faith and peace they found there brought them comfort, and made them feel spiritually closer to home.

Upon arrival, the Irish were shunned from the institutions of mainstream society, and the church acted to create institutions necessary for the group to survive. The creation of orphanages, dispensaries, hospitals, shelters, relief organizations, schools and colleges became a top priority for Hughes and the leadership of the church. While the leaders of the church were by and large men, it was the women of the church who staffed these institutions and took on the day to day care of the parish. The neediest in the parish were the newly arrived immigrants, and it was to this population that women sought to protect and serve.

“I am still and very good situation. I have been four months this summer in the County. I spent the greater part of the time in Hyde Park, Dutchess County a very beautifull [beautiful?]

(Page 2)

situation on the Hudson River ninety miles from the City. I spent a very pleasant summer there, the only difficulty is being so far from a Catholick [Catholic?] Church. I had seven miles to go to Church [my?] [lord?] but the family was very kind in sending me as often as I chose to go. I think thats the greatest difficulty in this country but we should not forget our confidence in Divine Providence and the blessed hopes of a Glorious immortality in a world to come.” ¹⁵⁰

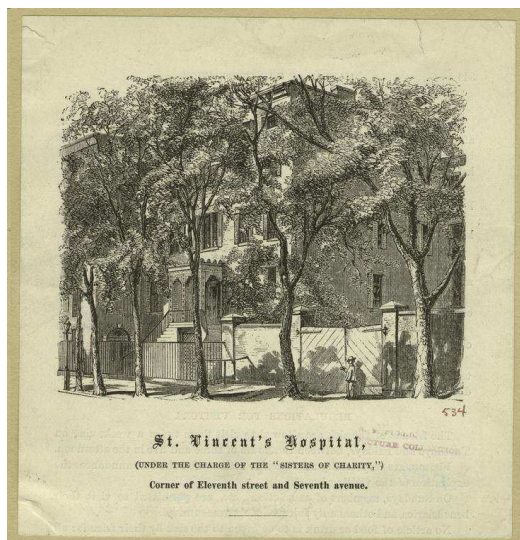
Just as Catholicism separated the Irish from the nativist community, so the Catholic Church became the entity that the Irish rallied around for survival. The Church offered immigrants not only spiritual sustenance, but a sense of community and solidarity through which to stave off the animosity they encountered in the city. This letter from Eliza Fitzgerald speaks of her desire to live in closer proximity to the Church so that she does not forget the strength of her faith in this new land.

¹⁵⁰ Correspondence from Eliza Fitzgerald, New York City, 4 December 1845 to her brother-in-law Michael Cahill, Quebec, CMSIED 9511085, Emigrant letters of The Fitzgerald Family, Co. Tipperary, 1829-1907. Copyright reserved by Edwina Goddard.



Protestant ideology underwent a change in the nineteenth century and this new form of Protestantism extolled the belief in human choice rather than predestination. In accordance with this, Protestants believed that individuals made a conscious choice to live either a clean and honest life or one of debauchery and depravity. For many of these zealots there was a direct link between Catholicism and depravity and they set out to warn true believers of the perils of association with the Irish. The direct result of this movement was the construction of missions formed to remove Catholic children from their families in Five Points and place them in the care of Protestant charitable institutions. The illustrations above *New York City-The Five Points House of Industry- The Children's Playing Hour* and *New York City- Calisthenic Exercises At The Five Points Mission School, "The Baby Class,"* both depict the intended education and moral cleansing of Catholic children at the hands of the Protestant reformers. These still images were first published in illustrated newspapers as propagandist pieces meant to influence the ideals of the nativist population.¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ "The Baby Class," Art and Picture Collection, New York Public Library Digital Collections, *The New York Public Library*, accessed on March 24, 2018; "New York City- Calisthenic Exercises at the Five Points Mission School," Art and Picture Collection, New York Public Library Digital Collections, *The New York Public Library*, accessed on March 24, 2018, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/iitems/510d47e0-d83d-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.



The nineteenth century church was quite gendered in its construction, with education and charity falling almost exclusively to women. As such, institutions like schools, hospitals and benevolent societies were the responsibility of women. Consequently, when it came time to create such organizations in New York, Hughes journeyed to Ireland to enlist the help of the Sisters of Charity. The sisters were quick to answer the call and to help protect young immigrant women and children from the dangers of the city. The Sisters of Charity worked tirelessly on their mission and were integral in the establishment of institutions like schools, halfway houses and orphanages. These creation of these establishments countermanded the efforts of Protestant reformers and provided Catholic women and children with the aid and support that they needed.¹⁵²

Emigrant Savings Bank

51 Chambers Street

The Irish Emigrant Society opened the doors to the Emigrant Savings Bank in 1850. The purpose of the bank was to instill good savings and investment habits among the Irish immigrant population. On the day that the bank opened its doors to business, Bishop Hughes was their first depositor when he opened Account No. 9 with \$25. Hughes deposited this sum to support the bank and set a good role model for his parishioners. In addition to promoting good spending and saving practices, the Emigrant Bank also acted as the conduit for the Irish in New York to send money back home to family in Ireland. In their first year of business, the bank sent the modern day equivalent of \$4.6 million to Ireland on their patrons' behalf. This was a staggering sum, particularly when considering that the bank's clientele did not have much discretionary income to part with.

¹⁵² "Saint Vincent's Hospital (under the charge of the Sisters of Charity) corner of Eleventh Street and Seventh Avenue," 1840-1870, Art and Picture Collection, New York Public Library Digital Collections, *The New York Public Library*, accessed on March 24, 2018, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e0-d3d7-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.



The records of the Emigrant Savings Bank offer a glimpse into the social history of nineteenth century Irish America, as between the bank collected personal and familial data for each depositor. These bring the Irish out of relative obscurity, for they contain information such as the name, occupation, home residence, birth date and spending habits for each customer. The information contained in these books is integral for it allows us to understand how the Irish accumulated their wealth, and how they used it to benefit the Irish on both sides of the Atlantic.¹⁵³

“any man or woman without a family are fools that would not venture and Come to this plentiful Country where no man or woman ever Hungered or ever will and where you will not be Seen Naked, but I can assure you there are Dangers upon Dangers Attending comeing here but my Friends nothing Venture nothing have.

Fortune will favour the brave, have Courage and prepare yourself for the next time that worthy man Mr. Boyan is Sending out the next lot, and Come you all Together Couragiously and bid adieu to that lovely place the land of our Birth. . . I am now Told its Gulf of Miserary oppression Degradetion and Ruin of every Discription which I am Sorry to hear of so Doleful a History to Be told of our Dr. Country. This my Dr. Father Induces me to Remit to you in this Letter 20 Dollars that is four Pounds thinking it might be Some Acquisition to you until you might Be Clearing away from that place all together and the Sooner the Better for Believe me

¹⁵³ “51 Chambers Street,” 1887-1964, The New York Public Library Digital Collections, Irma and Paul Milstein Division of United States History, Local History and Genealogy, Eliza Fitzgerald, *The New York Public Library*, accessed on March 25, 2018, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e2-eef8-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

*“I could not Express how great would be my joy at our seeing you all here Together where you would never want or be at a loss for a good Breakfast and Dinner. . . .”*¹⁵⁴

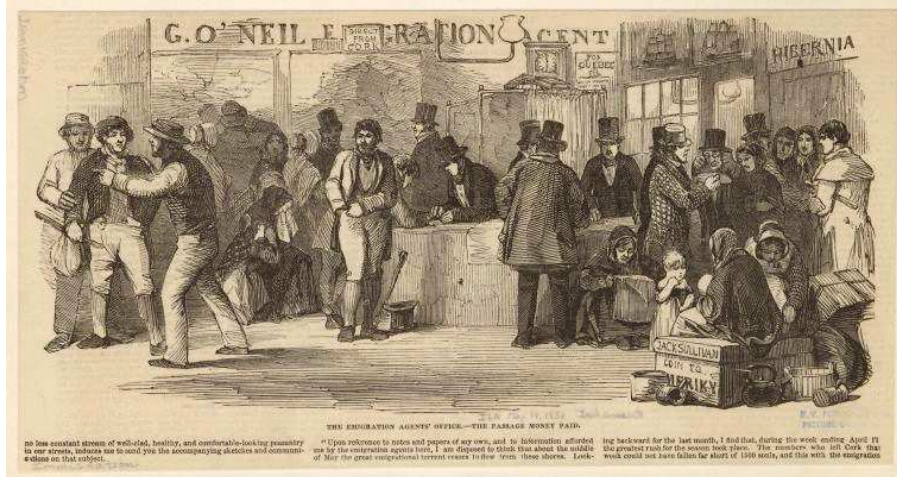
“The American Letter,” as it was dubbed, was a treasured gift, for letters were often the only link between the emigrant and those they left behind. In addition to the news and sentiment they shared these letters often contained much needed money, which was used either to fund the family farm or to help further emigration. In Margaret McCarthy’s letter in 1849, she not only regales her family with the opportunities that exist in New York, she provides them with the money needed to make the journey to join her. This practice was standard among Irish women, who used this method acted to promote further migration, and consequently acted as the bridge that built Irish America.



Together, *New York City-Irish depositors of the Emigrant Savings Bank withdrawing money to send to their suffering relatives in the old country and The Emigration Agents’ Office- The Passage Money Paid* portray the depositors of the Emigrant Savings Bank using their money to fund further emigration from Ireland. It is important to note that more of the depositors in the first picture are women, hence a preponderance of women financing migration.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Correspondence from Martha McCarthy 1850 New York to Family in Ireland, accessed on March 26, 2018, http://tiara.ie/Margaret_McCarthy_Letter.pdf New York September 22.

¹⁵⁵ “Irish Depositors of the Emigrant Savings Bank withdrawing money to send to their suffering relatives in the old country,” 1857, New York Public Library Digital Collections, Irma and Paul Milstein Division of United States History, Local History and Genealogy, *The New York Public Library*, accessed on March 24, 2018, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/c1437145-3a21-8cf2-e040-e00a180628d4>; “The Emigration Agents’ Office- the Passage Money Paid,” 1851, New York Public Library Digital Collections, Art and Picture Collection, *The New York Public Library*, accessed on March 24, 2018, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e1-37b7-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.



J. H. JOHNSON, Song Publisher, 7 N. Tenth St., Philadelphia.

NO IRISH NEED APPLY.

Written and sung by Miss KATHLEEN O'NEIL.

WANTED!—A smart active girl!—for the general household of a large family, one who can cook, clean, wash, and get up her fire, preferred.
S. B.—No Irish need apply.
London Times, Stopping, Feb. 1850.

1. I'm a simple Irish girl, and I'm looking for a place,
I've felt the grip of poverty, but never that an' d'ye, d'ye,
'Twill be long before I get one, tho' indeed it's hard to try,
I'm I need to seek advertisements.—No Irish need apply.
Alas! for my poor country, which I never will deny,
I'm sorry to see when they write,—"No Irish need apply."

2. Now I wonder what's the reason that the fortune-favored few,
Should never see what they're star, and treat us as they do,
Sure they all have Paddy's heart in warm, and willing in his hand,
They wish us, yet we may not wish to live in their land,
O, to their sister country, how can they treat us so,
By sending forth the cruel law.—"No Irish need apply."

3. Sure I did not do the like when they asked us on our shore,
For Irish hospitality there 's no need to explore,
And every door is open to the weary stranger still,
But would you had the Irish heart, you, and give it with a will,
For whisky, which has poison, in my own day,
That's what they do they always write.—"No Irish need apply."

4. Now what have they against us, now the world knows Paddy's heart,
For he's not here to fight their battle, both on land and on the water,
At the starting of the morning, and beneath an Indian sky,
But would you had the Irish heart, you, and give it with a will,
Do you mind Lieutenant Tenny, when he raised the battle cry?
Then see they are ashamed to write.—"No Irish need apply!"

5. Then they can't they us grudge, with "Shirley" and "Tom Mott!"
The best lieutenant "Catherine Kelly," and then later to the fore,
Alas! they may laugh at us "Bella," they cannot but admit,
That we are always ready and see a ready will,
And if they ask for beauty, what can be said to that eye?
Then is it not a shame to write.—"No Irish need apply!"

6. Oho! the French most likely crew to feel we might them,
For they can't see for their blue that was dealt by one of us,
If the Iron Duke of Wellington had never done his deed,
They might have had "Madame Bonaparte" with their land upon my word,
They think now of their hero, dim! his name will never die,
Where will they get another such if "No Irish need apply!"

7. Ah! but now I'm in the land of the "Glorious and Free,"
And proud I am to be in a country dear to me,
I can see by your kind face, that you will not deny,
A place in your house for Kathleen, where "No Irish need apply."
Then long may the Chain flourish, and ever may it be,
A power to the world, and the "Home of Liberty!"

J. H. JOHNSON, Stationer & Printer, 7 N. 10th St., Phila.

While New York City was indeed a land of opportunity, it was not always a welcoming place to the Irish. When Irish Catholic women first came to New York, they were greeted with animosity and bigotry which challenged their ability to find jobs and places to live. This anti-Catholic sentiment is best summarized in the phrase "No Irish Need Apply" that appeared in hundreds of job classified ads posted in the New York Times in the 1850s. The messaging in these ads specified that employers would only consider job applicants who were either American or Protestant.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ Kathleen O'Neil, "No Irish Need Apply: A Song of Discrimination," *Borders*, accessed on March 26, 2018, <https://apps.cndls.georgetown.edu/projects/borders/items/sho>.

Saint Patrick's Cathedral

Fifth Avenue between 50th and 51st Streets



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John Hughes proposed the creation of a glorious Cathedral to commemorate religious tolerance and freedom to his parishioners from the pulpit of Old Saint Patrick's Basilica in the 1850s. From the time of its inception, the Cathedral has clearly espoused Hughes vision for his flock of Irish Catholic dignity, intelligence and wealth. Since the Cathedral doors first opened in 1879, it has remained a monument to the Catholic faith and to the Irish who have formed the backbone of Catholicism in New York for over 150 years. The Cathedral is also a testament to Hughes determination and dedication to prove the permanence of the Irish to the fabric of the city, for neither could the bloodshed of the Civil War, nor lack of manpower, nor insufficient funds inhibit the Archbishops dreams. To this day, Saint Patrick's Cathedral stands proudly in the center of Manhattan....a testament to the determination of the Irish and their achievement of the American Dream. In the words of Jacob Riis, journalist and documentary photographer, famed for his dedication to the city's poor...

...the Irishman's revenge is complete. Victorious in defeat over his recent as over his more ancient foe, the one who opposed his coming no less than the one who drove him out, he

¹⁵⁷ "The Fair," *History and Heritage*, Saint Patrick's Cathedral, <https://saintpatrickscathedral.org/history-heritage>.

dictates to both their politics, and, secure in possession of the offices, returns the native his greeting with interest, while collecting his rents. ¹⁵⁸

While the work of Catholic historians has focused solely on the male members of the Church, the success of both the Church and the Irish community in America occurred in large part because of the efforts of the female members of society. It was through the efforts of both the sisters and the laity that the Church not only endured, but flourished. While men such as Hughes were the face of Catholicism, it was women who organized and ran the schools and charitable organizations so urgently needed by the newly arrived immigrants. Not only did women invest their time and energy into the church, they also contributed money from their limited income to help sustain the parish and support the community. Saint Patrick's Cathedral is the pinnacle of the Irish in New York, for the glory and endurance of the Church mirrors the accomplishments of the once downtrodden immigrants who stood together against adversity to earn a place in the burgeoning city.

¹⁵⁸ Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*, (1890).

Chapter 5: Recommendations

America is an immigrant nation, and there is no place in the country more representative of that fact than New York. Yet recently, the director of United States Citizenship and Immigration Services removed from their mission statement the declaration that America is a nation of immigrants.¹⁵⁹ The removal of this statement is indicative of the controversy surrounding immigration and immigration reform in the United States. As issues such as gang violence and immigration walls take center stage, the debate becomes more heated and the nation more divided.¹⁶⁰ While this division poses ethical considerations for a historic tour focused upon immigration history, it also makes the need for empathy and understanding more important than ever. Education does not in fact guarantee compassion, but maintaining the connection to our immigrant ancestry is a good first step in the right direction.¹⁶¹

Teaching immigration studies through the lens of an already accepted ethnic group helps students to understand the trials and tribulations that modern day immigrants face. Educators must be mindful not only of the political climate when teaching this topic though, but of the feelings of the immigrant children within the public school system as well. One challenge in

¹⁵⁹ Miriam Jordan, “Is America a ‘Nation of Immigrants’? Immigration Agency Says No,” *The New York Times* February 22, 2018, accessed on April 4, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/22/us/uscis-nation-of-immigrants.html>.

¹⁶⁰ Ron Nixon, “What Border Agents Say They Want (It’s Not a Wall),” *The New York Times* March 22, 2018, accessed on April 4, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/22/us/politics/border-patrol-wall-immigration-trump-senate-democrats.html>.

¹⁶¹ Dan-el Padilla Peralta, “How to Incorporate Immigration Studies into High School Curriculum,” *The New York Times*, accessed on February 8, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/09/12/is-any--immigration-reform-possible-in-this-political-climate/how-to-incorporate-immigration-studies-into-high-school-curriculum>.

creating this tour was respecting the wide range of economic and educational backgrounds existent between school districts within the city. In addition to these constraints are the language barrier that many students face. As the library promises to provide the same educational opportunities to all students regardless of background, the project endeavored to meet the needs of all students in attendance.

The following recommendations were constructed to help teachers make best use of this tour:

1. Teachers can utilize the historic background for each site to gain an understanding and prepare students prior to taking the tour. In the days leading up to the tour, instructors can share the historic background with students and provide them with the *Student Tour Pamphlet* (students and instructor will carry this segment with them during the tour). Sharing the history behind the tour sites ahead of time is beneficial as it leads to classroom conversation and allows students to get more out of the content delivered during the tour.
2. In order to teach students about historical research and source analysis, teachers can take students to the physical archive at the New York Public Library. As digital research is the medium most often used today, teachers can also show students how to conduct online research through the NYPL digital archive. This type of lesson prepares students for scholarly research and analysis in college and also teaches them how to think critically; both important skills as determined by NYDOE.

3. There are several locations over the course of the tour for students to rest, eat, use the bathroom and listen to instructors such as: students can start the tour at the common ground outside of the Famine Memorial; students can have a drink and snack in City Hall Park and talk about the Five Points; students can stand inside the vestibule of Old Saint Patrick's Cathedral for conversation and they can use bathroom in the Church; students will have to stand on the sidewalk in a group for the Emigrant Savings Bank; students can stand inside the vestibule at Saint Patrick's Cathedral and use the bathroom again once again; students can walk across the street to Rockefeller Center and look directly upon the Church for a full view of its magnificent architecture.
4. After the tour, teachers can follow up in the classroom with a discussion about the correlation between the Irish immigrant experience and contemporary immigrant groups. Instructors can ask questions like: What do you think the modern immigrant experience is like? Do they leave home for similar reasons (employment, housing, educational opportunities)? Do they face similar struggles in New York? Do they use similar strategies to assimilate (church, school, community)? How can we be more welcoming and make the transition easier?
5. If instructors want to explore immigration studies with their students further, the following supplemental field trips are beneficial: the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, Castle Clinton, Ellis Island, the Museum of the City of New York and the New York Historical Society.

6. The content delivered through this lesson can be tied into several other areas of history such as: the Industrial Revolution, the Civil War, city history, church history and political history.

Chapter 6: Budgetary Considerations and Staffing

Executive Summary

New York City witnessed substantial growth in the middle decades of the nineteenth century due to the constant wave of Irish Catholic immigrants who fled in the wake of the Great Famine. These newcomers taxed the infrastructure of the city and a period of unrest ensued. The Irish were greeted with animosity and hatred from the predominantly Protestant population who relegated Catholics to the lowest rungs of the social and economic hierarchy. To combat such bigotry the Irish clung to their Catholicism and to each other, and they created an infrastructure through which to survive. Although Irish women played an integral role in the building of Irish America, their voices have been lost to the historiography. Consequently, this historical tour removes women from obscurity and places them within the context of the city and the emerging Irish American ethnic identity.

The New York Public Library is a non-profit organization, and according to their charter they are required to receive the majority of their funding from the city and the state. The library has wide reaching foundational support that allows it to maintain areas of service to the public including: programming, exhibitions and educational resources. The library also receives large grants and endowments termed as “innovation funding” to create new projects that offer education-related activities and exhibits.¹⁶² As the library currently holds the databases, repositories and staffing needed for this project, all associated costs are in-kind. Staffing is the largest cost linked to this

¹⁶² “Foundational Support,” *The New York Public Library*, accessed on April 4, 2018, <https://nypl.org/support/foundation--support>.

project, for it requires the library's curators, archivists and project assistants to oversee the work. For budgetary purposes, the wages listed below were based upon salary averages for similar institutions in Manhattan as compared to data found in the 2017 National Museum Salary Survey.¹⁶³ Following is the funding analysis for the creation of the supplementary guide to go along with the tour, with a total in-kind cost of \$5,175.

In-Kind Costs

Curator	1 employee 50% salary for 1 months/\$60,000 annual	\$2,500 total
Archivist	1 employee 50% salary for 1 month/\$45,000 annual	\$1,875 total
Project assistants	\$20/hour, 1 employee, 10 hours per week, 4 weeks	\$800
Project assistants	\$20/hour, 1 employee/ hours to be determined	Cost dependent upon number of schools who come into library for research

Archivist: The archivist supervised selection of materials to use for project. This individual will ensure proper care and management of materials and keep track of items during all phases of the process. The archivist will organize all digital and physical material and maintain the corresponding metadata for each artifact.

Curator: The curator played an integral role in the selection process and acted as the collection specialist throughout. The curator was integral for their broad knowledge of the collections, resources, policies and patronage associated with the project.

¹⁶³ "National Museum Salary Survey," *American Alliance of Museums*, accessed on April 4, 2018, <http://www.aam-us.org/about-museums/salary-survey>.

Project assistants: Project assistants assisted the curator and archivist and did the tasks necessary to create the guidebook.

Goals

Walking tours are a particularly effective way to study the process of migration and assimilation, both relevant to the eleventh grade curriculum mandated by the New York City Department of Education. This type of program is a suitable way to complement the high school curriculum, for it supports classroom lessons and bridges the gap between popular, academic and local history.¹⁶⁴ Due to the vast resources and broad reach of the library, this project is a good opportunity to meet its goals of sharing resources, delivering educational opportunities, welcoming diversity and embracing New York's unique history and place in the world.

¹⁶⁴ Brian Greenfield and Bruce Reinholdt, "Teaching American History the Public History Way," *The National Council on Public History*, ncph.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/Grad-Undergrad-Greenfield-Reinholdt-Article.pdf, accessed on February 15, 2018 (2009): 3.

Conclusion

As high school students enter the middle of their junior year, the social studies curriculum grapples with the many tribulations and advancements of the post-Civil War era. In many respects, this period is the story of New York becoming itself, for the immigration and industrialization that characterized the time permanently altered the landscape of the city. Together, these issues fueled the great machine of the Industrial Revolution which allowed the city to grow exponentially in wealth and size. It is important to introduce students to the struggles that immigrants faced as they endeavored to gain a foothold in New York. Through such efforts, students are introduced to questions like why immigrants left their native land in search of better opportunities, what the climate was like in the city upon arrival, how they adapted and how they altered their new homeland to meet their needs.

The curriculum set forth by the New York City Department of Education addresses issues such as nativist prejudice; stereotyping and reactions to incoming populations; the impact of assimilation; immigrant people as an increased workforce; and the immigrant contribution to American society through the experience of the Chinese and Mexican populations.¹⁶⁵ While the experience of these groups is undoubtedly expedient for such lessons, immigration studies must begin with the Irish, for they were the first diversely different group to arrive. Early historians in the field like Robert Ernst, Arthur Schlesinger and Oscar Handlin recognized the value of the

¹⁶⁵ “NYC 9-12 Social Studies Scope and Sequence,” *The New York City Department of Education*, accessed, accessed on March 2, 2018, http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/A739A67E-6228-4084-99C8-F890617D265B/0/scopeandsequence912_v6_web.pdf.

Irish to any study of immigration, for their large numbers and Catholicism made them doubly disliked.¹⁶⁶ The Irish were consequently the first group with a true immigrant experience for these factors made them stand apart from mainstream society and challenged their ability to assimilate.

The process of assimilation is paramount to contemplative learning about the immigrant experience. Initially, historians believed in an assimilation theory that was a sort of mathematical calculation, whereby groups incrementally transitioned to some kind of Americanness with each indigenous cultural trait forgotten, and each new American trait gained.¹⁶⁷ Later historians refuted this theory, for they believed immigrant groups maintained close ties with each other as they stubbornly clung to their own ethnic identity. Either theory allowed for only one of two outcomes: the complete abandonment of the old culture for the new or retention of the old culture and contempt for the new. Assimilation is actually far more dynamic than this for in the end, the locale, the immigrant, and the native population are all permanently altered.¹⁶⁸

In the case of the Irish, the group maintained strong ties to both the ideals of their native ethnicity and their newly adopted American culture. Irish immigrants became Irish Americans through the strong network of communities and institutions that they built to the benefit of the group.¹⁶⁹ Such institutions are integral to assimilation, for they provide individuals with a sense of identity through which to shelter members from the harshness of their new surroundings. Thusly, the Irish set the stage for later immigrants groups, for each successive faction replaced

¹⁶⁶ Joe J. Lee, "Introduction," in *Making the Irish American*, (2006): 6-7.

¹⁶⁷ Timothy J. Meagher, "Introduction: The Irish as Immigrants and Ethnics," in *The Columbia Guide to Irish American History*, (2005): 6-7.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid: 8.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid: 10.

the preceding group in the slum like enclaves of the city, and created the institutions required to survive.¹⁷⁰

The role that women played becomes essential when looking at assimilation and acculturation, for women were integral to the community based institutions which often fell to their care. For the Irish, women displayed great independence, fortitude, self-improvement and ambition. Joe Lee, renowned historian of Irish America, believed that although women have long been overlooked, their story is vital to shaping the contours of the immigrant experience.¹⁷¹ As Irish women spent most of their lives doing work that kept them behind closed doors, their stories have long been untold. This historic walking tour traced the path of migration that the Irish took as they became American, and endeavored to tell the story of these vibrant women as they rediscovered themselves in their new land. The tour used correspondence, journals, illustrations, maps and directory information to create a visual image of Irish immigrant women in New York. Through such means, students gained a better understanding of the tribulations they faced, and the successes they achieved, as the Irish endeavored to become American.

Irish women travelled to America for economic opportunities unheard of in Ireland. Several factors differentiated them from their contemporary sisters and made them unique. Unlike other immigrant groups, more women emigrated than men, and they did so alone, without the support of a male family member. These women used the strength born of hardship in Ireland and forced emigration to build lives for themselves in America. There they sought fortunes independent of male family members and acted as self-sufficient beings, accumulating greater wealth than other contemporary female groups. Upon arrival, they continually strove to

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Joe J. Lee, "Introduction," in *Making the Irish American*, (2006): 31.

fund the migration of family members, and to cultivate a sense of community for the benefit of their posterity.

Unlike their male counterparts, these women did not get stuck in the past, but remained forward focused as they built new lives for themselves in America. Through their strength, hard work and perseverance, they helped establish the institutions necessary for the Irish not only to survive, but to thrive.¹⁷² For the Irish, the responsibilities of home, family and money belonged to women, and through such means women integrated American values with Irish cultural norms to help the group assimilate. In addition, the middle-class domestic values that Irish women learned in the intimacy of American homes ultimately allowed the Irish to Americanize faster than other ethnicities. It was their commitment to education, religion, domesticity and community that helped the Irish to assimilate so effectively, and such efforts enabled first generation Irish Americans to live far better lives than their immigrant parents: a trait not dissimilar from the immigrant groups who venture to the city today.

Immigration history pushes students to consider moral and ethical questions around identity, inclusivity and belonging. In the current state of agitation surrounding immigrants and their rights, discussion of such values and questions is vital. Supporting the rights of immigrants is not always a popular stance, but it is important for the American nation to remember its own immigrant roots. In the words of George Washington, without whom this American nation might not exist, “The bosom of America is open to receive not only the Opulent and respected Stranger, but the oppressed and persecuted of all Nations and Religions; whom we shall

¹⁷² Hasia R. Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century*, (1983): XIV.

welcome to a participation of all our rights and privileges.” Immigration has been integral to our nation since its inception. Teaching the history of immigration to high school students provides the next generation with far more than academic content. Immigration history ultimately forces students to become broadminded thinkers with the ability to analyze the ideals of democracy, and to formulate their own beliefs for the direction that their country should take.

Appendix: Source Descriptions

Illustrated Newspapers: Illustrated newspapers, such as *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* and *Harper's Weekly* were newspapers that used illustrations to attract their audience.

Illustrations were very important to readers of the 1850s, and these newspapers capitalized on this interest with their often sensationalist depictions of current events. The peak of these newspapers was 1861-1865, and their illustrated depiction of the issues of the Civil War years caused circulation to often soar beyond 100,000 copies per issue. As the newspaper industry and leadership centered upon the nativist and protestant populations, illustrations took a decidedly anti-Catholic stance.

Perris-Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps: The Perris-Sanborn fire insurance map collection consists of a series of uniform large scale maps and atlases. These maps are replete with every building type, including commercial, industrial and residential and as such bring whole neighborhoods to life. In 1835 a major fire swept through Manhattan which caused the destruction of millions of dollars in damage. The insurance industry reorganized itself as a result of the financial devastation caused by this conflagration and the fire insurance maps by William Perris and the Sanborn Map Company were the result of the event.

Emigrant Savings Bank Test Books: Between the years of 1850-1883, the Emigrant Savings Bank captured the personal information for thousands of Irish immigrants who fled to America in the wake of the famine. Included in these volumes of records are the Index Books; Test Books; Transfer, Signature and Test Books; Deposit-Account Ledger. Together this database

provides the name of each depositor along with corresponding account number, account date, occupation, residence and year and place of birth.

Doggett's New York City Street Directories: John Doggett Jr. began publication of the first street directory for New York City in 1841. These directories offer a treasure trove of historical information for in addition to the name and address for each city resident, many of the volumes offer the age and occupation for each person in a given residence. In addition to the personal information provided, the directories also advertisements and information about significant events. For example, there is an entry in the directory for 1845 entitled "Removals, So far ascertained by the Great Fire, July 19th 1845," which offers an inventory of the people impacted by the fire along with the buildings that were destroyed. Such information provides a glimpse of important current events in the year of publication.

Personal Correspondence: One of the resources of the Mellon Centre for Migration Studies (MCMS) is an historical Irish Emigration Database which is a work in progress and contains copies of primary source documents relating to Irish emigration to North America in the 18th and 19th centuries. Document types include letters, extracts from family papers, official reports, shipping advertisements, newspaper notices of births, deaths and marriages of emigrants. The Irish Emigration Database holds thousands of emigrant letters that tell the immigrant story in the voice of those who lived the experience.

Traveler's Accounts: In the 19th century, cities across the United States and Europe experienced great poverty and individuals set out for a first-hand view of the depravity of the slums. In his journey to America in 1842, Charles Dickens made sure to visit the Five Points, the world's most notorious slum. Dickens wrote of the poverty that he witnessed in his work

American Notes, A Journey in order to illuminate the overcrowding and degradation of human life that existed in places like Five Points.

Song sheets: In the 19th century, songs were a popular way to impart sentiment to a large audience. The wave of Irish immigrants who arrived in America during this period sparked nativist hostility and the introduction of the “Know Nothings” American party. This group used propagandist songs to glorify the nativist cause and defame the Catholic newcomers.

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