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OVERVIEW
Forging Forward and Looking Back

IN THE summer of 1912 my father, John Thomas McCaffrey, left Sligo on a White Star Line passenger ship bound for New York. Unlike most of the young men and women leaving Ireland for the United States, he had a farm, 40 acres of mostly bog and rocks in the townland of Dowra, County Cavan, at the foot of Cuilcagh Mountain, a few hundred yards from the Shannon Pot, the source of Ireland's magnificent river. Economic realities drove most Irish emigrants from the land of their birth. Only one son could inherit the farm; only one daughter could have a dowry to marry. Outside the Belfast area there were few employment prospects in industry, and small Irish farms needed little agricultural labor. Some lads joined the Royal Irish Constabulary, enlisted in the British armed forces, or found jobs in towns. Some lassies worked in shops or as domestic servants in the big houses of a fading gentry class, in cottages of prosperous farmers, or in middle-class homes in Irish cities and towns. And there was always the church. A considerable number of young Catholics became priests, nuns, or brothers. But the vast majority had to leave home to make a decent living, and after 1840 most of them preferred the United States to Britain or other parts of its Empire. Many Irish religious also departed Ireland to serve the spiritual needs of the diaspora or to do missionary work in the British colonies.

From 1877 to 1914 young Irish Catholics continued to flock to America as they had in earlier times. This group of emigrants, my father among them, left

Ireland first because of the agricultural depression in the late 1870s, which hit the western part of the country particularly hard, and subsequently because of a desire to escape a lifetime of boredom in a stagnant economy and a peasant Catholic puritanism that encouraged gender segregation and hard drinking as a relief for sexual frustration. Staying in Ireland meant not only depressing monotony but also arranged and usually loveless marriages or permanent celibacy. Options were particularly limited for young women, and they, even more than their brothers, decided that the United States, with all of its hardships, was a promising alternative to rural Ireland.[1]

The Irish Catholic immigrants who entered the United States during the nineteenth century were for the most part socially and economically handicapped. Many were illiterate, few were skilled in either agriculture or industry, and some were more fluent in Irish than English. These liabilities froze them into the lowest levels of the unskilled labor and domestic servant classes. Famine refugees, especially those who left after 1847, represented the nadir of the Irish exodus.

Life in a rural, Catholic, sometimes Irish-speaking culture did not prepare Irish immigrants for urban, industrial, Protestant America. Traumatized by the transition from the familiar Old World to the strange New World, they experienced a slow and painful adaptation. They became urban America's first group social problem. Their crime, filth, alcoholism, mental disorders, violence, and family collapses irritated Anglo-Protestants, but not as much as their religion. Anglo-America inherited its no-popery bigotry from Anglo-Saxon England as the core of a nativism insisting that Catholicism represented an alien, subversive religion that threatened American culture and institutions.[2]

My father's generation participated in the final stages of a mass emigration whose members had experienced a steady improvement in education and economic fortunes since 1850. Because the Famine had eliminated at least 2½ million people from the landscape, forced survivors to take a more prudent look at marriage, and institutionalized emigration, it cleared the way for a more prosperous Ireland. Tenant farmers replaced agricultural laborers as the most numerous class, and the size of their holdings gradually increased from 1840 to 1900, as Ireland went from Europe's most to least densely populated country.

Political activity also contributed to positive change. In response to Catholic, agrarian, and nationalist agitations, British Liberal governments between 1860 and 1890 disestablished the Protestant church, legalized secure tenures at fair rents, loaned money to farmers to purchase their holdings, democratized the Irish franchise, and concluded an alliance with Irish constitutional nationalism, encouraging hopes for self-government. In the 1880s and 1890s, British Conservative governments, hoping to discourage nationalist enthusiasms, converted tenant farmers into peasant proprietors; created a congested districts board that opened agricultural and

technical schools, equipped and instructed fishermen, and organized a cottage textile industry; and financed public works projects such as railway and road construction and land-improving drainage projects.

By 1914 Ireland was considerably more prosperous than in 1870, though still a poor, underdeveloped country. With the help of the population decrease, the reform efforts, and dollar gifts from children in the United States, living standards rose appreciably. Rural cottages were larger and more comfortable. Potatoes remained a key element in the diet, but farmer's wives supplemented them with bread, butter, milk, eggs, cereals, vegetables, and occasionally meat.[3]

Education also improved. In 1831 the British government established a system of national education to Anglicize recently emancipated Irish Catholics. National schools probably hastened the decline of Irish and the spread of English as the vernacular, but increased literacy multiplied the reading audience for nationalist books, newspapers, and periodicals. In general, the schools provided a sound basic education. By 1900 about 95 percent of Irish emigrants were literate.[4]

My father was a tribute to the national schools. He was forced to leave school and work on the farm after the sixth grade (his father and seven of his brothers and sisters had died of tuberculosis), but the instruction of Master McHugh inspired him to read nationalist versions of Irish history, pre-Revival Irish literature (especially the novels of Charles Kickham), and Shakespeare's plays.

Better living conditions, literacy, and nationalist aspirations reduced Catholic and Gaelic fatalism and pessimism. Furthermore, a reformed and revitalized church helped to refine and discipline the Irish character. On his visit to Ireland in 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville observed that Irish Catholics were more devout than those on the Continent, but ignorance, superstition, and religious indifference pervaded the poor, largely Gaelic, underdeveloped, and densely populated parts of the country.[5] The people in these areas lacked adequate numbers of clergy and chapels. Priests were not well educated, and bishops scandalized their flocks by publicly quarreling over the relationship between Catholicism and nationalism and the British government's Irish policy.

The Famine had a brutal effect on Irish Catholic society, particularly its poorest members, and therefore the most ignorant and superstitious portion of the population. With their disappearance, the church was better able to instruct and minister to the more affluent, better-educated survivors.[6]

In the last year of the Famine, Pius IX appointed Paul Cullen, rector of the Irish college in Rome, archbishop of Armagh. In 1852 he moved to Dublin, where, until his death in 1878, he dominated Irish Catholicism. Cardinal Cullen reformed and romanized the religion in Ireland, building chapels and schools, improving clerical education, enforcing a public appearance of harmony among the bishops, and persuading the laity to attend mass and devotions diligently,

receive the sacraments, and contribute pennies, shillings, and pounds to the church in Ireland, Rome, and foreign missions.[7]

Cullen distrusted nationalism because it presented both secular and Gallican competition to his ultramontane Catholicism, but it did contribute to his "devotional revolution." Since the 1820s, when Daniel O'Connell had transformed the people's religious identity into a sense of nationality, Catholicism and Irishness had become inseparable. Young Ireland's cultural nationalism, increased literacy, and agitations for tenant rights and home rule had spread and intensified nationalism. And as the Irish became more nationalist, they also became more devoutly Catholic. This religion's affiliation in turn became a visible sign of ethnicity.[8]

Although the devotional revolution played an important role in civilizing and disciplining the Irish character, it also had a negative effect. Reinforcing the economic need for more prudent marriage patterns, the church's emphasis on chastity and its obsession with sins of the flesh contributed to the dullness of Irish rural life and the social segregation of men and women that persuaded so many to leave the country.

Not only were Irish immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries culturally, socially, and religiously more scrubbed and polished than preceding generations, they also had a more pleasant journey to and reception in New York. Since the 1850s steamships had reduced the time of the journey from five to two weeks or less and were more comfortable and sanitary than sailing vessels. Arriving in New York, new Americans no longer had to suffer a barrage of runners, mostly Irish, meeting them on the dock, grabbing their scruffy baggage, and hustling them off to filthy boardinghouses/grog shops whose landlords, again usually Irish, cheated them out of their meager poke.

In 1855 Castle Garden, at the lower tip of Manhattan, opened to help immigrants make the transition from Europe to the United States. Once Fort Clinton and then an opera house, it had facilities for bathing, cooking, changing currency, collecting and mailing letters, depositing valuables, purchasing railroad and riverboat tickets, and obtaining advice from representatives of religious and benevolent societies. When they left the main building, immigrants could consult employment agencies staffed with translators. Castle Garden officials provided luggage carriers and directed them to respectable boardinghouses. In 1892 Ellis Island replaced Castle Garden and improved on its services.[9]

When my father arrived in New York, it was a city with a strong Irish flavor. In 1870 more than 200,000 Irish immigrants (21.4% of the city's population) lived in Manhattan, and 73,985 (18.7%) resided in Brooklyn.[10] By 1884 some 40 percent of New Yorkers were of Irish extraction, 5 percent more than Germans, the second largest group.[11] In 1890, 196,372, or 24 percent of all Brooklyn Caucasians, had Irish immigrant mothers, the largest foreign-born maternity figure for the city. For New York the numbers were 399,348, or 26.8 percent,

second to the German 27 percent.[12] In 1898 the Greater New York Charter merged Manhattan and Brooklyn, the number one and number three Irish metropolitan centers in the United States.[13] Although Russian Jewish and Italian immigrations reduced New York's Irish and German ambiences in the late nineteenth century, in 1900 people of Irish stock still accounted for 22 percent of New York's almost three million residents.[14]

Despite their improved quality, post-1870 Irish immigrants still arrived with fewer skills than Anglo-Americans or immigrants from other parts of northern Europe, particularly Germany. Consequently, they had to settle for casual, unskilled, dangerous, dirty, unhealthy, and menial jobs. Men worked in stables or drove horses as dairymen or cabbies, loaded and unloaded ships on the docks, swept out factories and saloons, dug foundations and carried hods on construction sites, and served people in restaurants and bars.[15]

Some women found employment in factories, garment district sweatshops, and restaurants, and others became domestics, an occupation that Anglo-Protestants tended to dismiss as degrading. Many parents of non-Irish ethnics also worried about having their daughters work in the homes of strangers. But to single Irish women, domestic service meant comfortable living quarters, nourishing food, clean clothing, a taste of civilized living, and, in view of the room and board, offered better pay than work in a factory, mill, or the garment industry. In general, Irish women were more sober and responsible than Irish men. They saved their money, sending it home in the form of ship passages for siblings or in cash or bank drafts to help their parents. And they contributed a significant amount of their income to the Catholic church.

If husbands did not desert them or perish early from diseases associated with hard and hazardous labor, married Irish women were unlikely to work outside the home. Matriarchs concentrated their energies on their families, pushing spouses and children toward middle-class respectability. Abandoned wives or widows often returned to work outside the home, but many supported themselves and their children by taking in borders and by sewing. Occasionally married women with working husbands also became landladies or seamstresses to supplement family incomes.[16]

Around the turn of the century, the health and social ills associated with poverty continued to plague Irish neighborhoods. There was little space for cleanliness or privacy in overcrowded tenements. The contents of outdoor toilets spilled into streets and courtyards. Odors and bacteria from human excrement and urine, slaughter and gas houses, and animal offal, particularly from cart horses, fouled the air and contributed to disease and high mortality. Irish neighborhoods on the Lower East Side (Five Points and the Fourth Ward), the middle East Side (the Gas House district), and the middle West Side (Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen) were afflicted with alcoholism, brutality, crime, despair, and family conflict. Physical and mental disease also took a heavy toll. Tuberculosis, depression, and schizophrenia ravaged Irish America as they did

Ireland. Husbands sodden with drink beat wives who often retaliated with fists, skillets, or other kitchen implements. Men frequently deserted families. Youngsters ran wild in the streets. A few young women became prostitutes and petty thieves, but young men were more likely to turn to a criminal life. Street gangs proliferated in Irish neighborhoods. Some were connected with volunteer fire companies and Tammany politics. Gang members protected the ballot boxes of their patrons and destroyed those of their enemies. They also intimidated opposition voters. Hell's Kitchen probably was the most violent Irish section of New York. Police found it impossible to control the gangs there, leaving the turf to the Gophers, Gorillas, the Parlor Mob, and the Rhodes Gang.[17]

Male recreation reflected the cruelty and crudity of tenement life. Boys swam in the garbage- and sewage-infested East and Hudson rivers. Their older brothers and fathers enjoyed bare-knuckle fighting or placing bets at the dog and rat pits, where assorted mixed and pure-bred terriers competed in killing rodents and each other. Cock fighting was another wagering "sport" relished by men.

Upper- and middle-class New Yorkers still remembered the Irish violence of the Draft Riots of 1863 and the Orange Riots of 1870 and 1871.[18] Those incidents and the heavy Irish involvement in crime and social disorder confirmed nativist opinion that Irish Catholics were a cancer eating away at the vitals of their city. Inheriting Anglo-Saxon or Scots-Irish ancestral prejudices, they were convinced that Protestantism represented liberty, reason, industry, and order, whereas Catholic authoritarianism nurtured ignorance, irrationality, and superstition. As leaders of the Catholic Church in the United States and as influential citizens in urban politics, the Irish took the brunt of anti-Catholic prejudice.

American novels and plays featured negative Irish stereotypes. Ignorant and foolish Biddys and Paddys wandered through fiction and across theater stages. *Harper's Weekly* cartoonist Thomas Nast, in his attacks on Tammany Hall during the late 1800s, depicted its army of Irish voters as menacing, simian-featured monsters, a caricature projected in other newspapers and periodicals. In cartoons, novels, and plays the Irish were either alcoholic, shillelagh-wielding thugs or loquacious but ignorant fools, blundering through life, obviously in need of Anglo-Protestant guidance. Anti-Irish Catholic prejudice had racist overtones, suggesting that only inferior people would choose such a debased religion.[19]

Although their faith targeted the Irish for nativist animosity, Catholicism as well as nationalism and politics instilled pride, dignity, and hope. Catholicism played a particularly important role: its liturgy and sacraments bridged the chasm between rural Ireland and urban America, providing psychological and spiritual comfort in a strange and hostile environment. Catholic parishes in American cities functioned as rural villages preserving a sense of community.[20]

Cullen's devotional revolution spread to the American branch of the Irish spiritual empire. Post-1877 immigrants knew their religion and practiced it

more diligently and regularly than those who had come before.[21] Compared with other ethnics of their gender, Irish men were well represented at church services. But as Colleen McDannell explains in chapter 9, Irish women were the pillars of the church just as they were of the Irish family. They were more regular in their attendance at mass and devotions and the reception of the sacraments, and they gave their enthusiasm, as well as their time and money, to the support of the parish.

Irish American bishops, like their Irish counterparts, were strong champions of ultramontanism and displayed an aggressive Catholicism in promoting the building of churches and schools. In 1864 John McCloskey, America's first cardinal, became archbishop of New York. Fifteen years later he completed the construction of St. Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue, started by his predecessor, Archbishop John Hughes. St. Patrick's was a monument to the spirit and zeal of Irish American Catholicism. McCloskey was an organizer as well as a builder. He divided parishes into smaller units, strengthening them as communities, enabling priests to establish closer contacts with the laity.

New York's archbishops would have liked to shelter all Catholic children from Protestant and secular influences through parochial education, but in 1870 only 68 percent of New York parishes had schools, which enrolled about 19 percent of the city's Catholic youngsters. They had difficulty achieving the ideal because the church was dependent on the generosity of devout but economically strapped parishioners. In addition, Catholic leaders had few reasons to complain of public education. Irish political power kept nativist propaganda out of neighborhood schools, and many of their teachers and administrators, usually women, were Irish Catholics.[22]

Because Catholicism insists that the sacraments are essential to salvation, its priests have enjoyed more respect and power than the clergy of other faiths. And in Ireland the laity have been especially partial to their priests because they symbolize a religion that is also part and parcel of Irish culture and nationality. Unlike Continental Catholicism, the Irish variety has been associated with the peasantry not the aristocracy. Priests praised popular sovereignty and participated in agitations for economic and social justice and national independence. Priests, nuns, and brothers were the only educated Catholics in rural Ireland, with the exception of teachers. Parish priests shared influence and competed with Anglo-Protestant landlords for peasant deference. Irish Catholics sent their best and brightest sons and daughters into the church. A priest in the family brought distinction to all of its members. Because of the clergy's secular as well as religious importance, parishioners asked clerical advice on worldly and spiritual matters.

In the United States, Catholicism continued to be a significant presence in Irish life. Not only did priests say mass, hear confessions, visit the sick and the old, marry the young, and bury the dead, but they also verbally chastised alcoholic and abusive husbands, wayward wives, and delinquent children and

adolescents. Clerical guidance and moral discipline instilled by nuns and brothers in Catholic schools speeded Irish economic mobility and respectability.

The Catholic Church functioned as a social service as well as a religious and educational institution. At a time when city governments did little to lessen the effects of poverty, Catholic hospitals, orphanages, and shelters for the hungry and homeless did much to alleviate human suffering. The clergy also attempted to address one of the main causes of much Irish misery: alcoholism. From the time Father Theobald Mathew, the Cork Capuchin temperance leader, visited the United States in 1851, American Catholicism had challenged alcohol addiction. The St. Vincent De Paul Society, church councils, parish temperance societies, and the Catholic Total Abstinence Union of America (1872) all denounced excessive drinking as a cause of immorality, family disharmony, and poverty.

The Sisters of Mercy cared for and educated hundreds of the neglected or orphaned children of the immigrant poor at St. Vincent's Nursery on Graham Street (Taaffe Place) in Brooklyn, pictured here in 1902. After 1875, when the Children's Law made public funds available to religious institutions, Catholic child care expanded rapidly, offering alternatives to Protestant efforts like the Children's Aid Society, which had been looked upon with suspicion. By 1890, religious orders of Irish and Irish American women were caring for more than 13,000 children in orphan asylums and industrial homes throughout the city, including the Catholic Protectory in the Bronx and the Mission of the Immaculate Virgin at Mount Loretto on Staten Island. (Courtesy of the Sisters of Mercy, Brooklyn Regional Community.)

Many young Catholics took total abstinence pledges at confirmation, as did older members of congregations at parish missions. Temperance in the nineteenth century was "what birth control was to mid-twentieth-century Catholicism; the *cause célèbre* of moral reform."[23] Catholic pressures did curb the beer and whiskey thirsts of many Irish Catholics, but drinking remained an important part of their culture (the neighborhood saloon was a social and political club), and often it was an escape from the anguish of wretched lives.

Although Catholic social services did much to ameliorate the consequences of poverty, the New York hierarchy and clergy failed to attend to its causes. As John Cardinal McCloskey's coadjutor from 1880 to 1885 and then as his successor from 1885 to 1902, Michael Augustine Corrigan established New York as the citadel of American conservative and authoritarian Catholicism, a reputation it still retains. Corrigan was a pious and dedicated priest and gave much of himself to the administration of his archdiocese, but he had little concern for the material needs of his people. Like many Catholic bishops and priests, more often in the East than in other parts of the country, Corrigan believed that working-class reform movements were tainted by secular materialism or the Protestant social gospel. The archbishop viewed poverty as part of the natural order, a product of original sin. He promised his flock that those who suffered the misfortunes of this world with Christian resignation would be rewarded with eternal bliss in the next.

Corrigan warned reformers that they should not try to eliminate poverty by interfering with private property.[24] Convinced that socialists had infiltrated the labor movement, he led other bishops in opposing unions. Corrigan advised Leo XIII to proscribe the Knights of Labor, who had made the first significant attempt to organize American workers on a national scale. When the pope issued the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, New York's archbishop interpreted it as a defense of private property and an attack on socialism more than an appeal for social justice.[25]

Corrigan distrusted American culture, which he saw as a threat to the faith of the laity. He and his mentor, Bishop Bernard McQuaid of Rochester, allied with German American prelates in the Midwest, promoted ethnicity as a form of Catholic cultural isolation. Corrigan and McQuaid battled Archbishop John Ireland (St. Paul), James Cardinal Gibbons (Baltimore), and other members of the hierarchy who insisted that not only were Americanism and Catholicism compatible, but liberal democracy gave the church an opportunity to flourish. Americanist bishops encouraged Catholics to fraternize with members of other faiths, praised and tried to cooperate with public schools, and believed that if their church refused to identify with the economic and social problems of the laity, it, like the European church, would lose the urban working class. Gibbons' visit to Rome prevented a condemnation of the Knights of Labor, but in 1899 Leo XIII, at the urging of Corrigan, McQuaid, and members of the French hierarchy, labeled distorted views of Ireland and his friends as an Americanist

heresy. The archbishop of New York won a major victory over his St. Paul enemy, but the controversy cost them both red hats.[26]

If Catholicism was religion, culture, and nationality for the New York Irish, politics gave them access to power and economic opportunity. It was the only skill they brought with them from Ireland. In agitations for Catholic emancipation and repeal of the union with Britain, Daniel O'Connell organized the Irish masses for political action and instructed them in the effectiveness of organized public opinion.[27] In the 1880s, under the leadership of Charles Stewart Parnell, members of Parliament who promoted home rule were the most disciplined at Westminster.

Since nationalist politics in Ireland opposed Anglo-Protestant landlordism, it was only natural that the Irish in America would feel comfortable in the antiaristocratic party of Jefferson and Jackson. Actually, pragmatic more than ideological considerations determined their choice. Democratic politicians were less nativist than Federalists, Whigs, or Republicans; hastened Irish naturalization; and found the immigrants jobs.

The idea that politics enabled the Irish to achieve economic and social mobility has been rejected in some quarters for the view that political jobs actually kept them in low-level blue-collar or white-collar employment.[28] Although it is true that the Irish were so fascinated with politics that they neglected other American opportunities, until well into the twentieth century Protestant control of business and the professions in New York and other cities excluded or put quotas on Catholic and Jewish as well as African American participation. Therefore the Irish applied their talents to the achievement of power and influence in the Catholic Church, politics, and the labor movement. For people who suffered poverty in rural Ireland and urban America, security was a primary objective. Employment connected with politics was relatively stable and often supplemented by pensions, thus providing a base of confidence that eventually launched Irish America into the middle class.

After the fall of the Tweed Ring in 1871, intelligent, self-educated, devoutly Catholic, American-born John Kelly became Tammany leader, initiating an Irish ascendancy at the hall that lasted until after World War II. Distinguishing between "honest" graft, which was a fee for services rendered, and "dishonest" graft, which he defined as outright stealing from the public purse, Kelly purged Tammany of the flagrant corruption of the Tweed years. He also restructured Tammany on the hierarchical model of the Catholic Church.[29] In 1886 Richard Croker, Kelly's protégé, replaced him as Tammany boss. A Famine refugee at the age of three, Croker began his political career as a Tammany street thug. He was shrewd, if ignorant, and skilled at manipulating political power. His reign was a record of ruthless power and massive corruption. Scandal finally forced Croker's resignation. In 1903 he retired to Ireland as a multimillionaire horse breeder and a verbal supporter of, and financial contributor to, home rule nationalism.[30]

Under Kelly and for most of Croker's tenure, Tammany was limited in what it could do for its working class constituency because of its alliance with Democratic Party factions Irving Hall and County Democrats, or Swallow Tail bankers, businessmen, industrialists, and lawyers with a conservative agenda. Popular maverick politicians, such as Sheriff Jimmy "The Famous" O'Brien and former heavyweight boxing champion John Morrissey, who became a reform member of Congress and a state senator, challenged Tammany leadership in Irish circles. Unlike more recent political machines, Tammany could not really select candidates or control them once they were in office.[31]

Despite the complaints of nativist writer Paul Bocock and Theodore Roosevelt that the Irish were corrupting New York politics, their influence actually declined as their numbers increased.[32] From 1844 to 1884 the Irish percentage of the population rose from about 20 to 40 percent, but they held only 14 percent of Tammany leadership positions compared with the Swallow Tail's 64 percent.[33]

Although Tammany was negligent in responding to working-class complaints, individual politicians such as Big Tim Sullivan in the Bowery and George Washington Plunkitt in Hell's Kitchen did cater to voter needs. Sullivan, the most powerful politician in lower Manhattan, a nonsmoking, nongambling teetotaler, bought food and clothing and paid rent for the poor from vice protection graft (he was accused of but denied prostitution connections). The "King of the Bowery" also championed organized labor and social and political feminism.[34] Plunkitt's "diary" records conscientious attendance at Irish, German, Italian, and Jewish wakes and weddings, gifts for the bride, flowers for the deceased, licenses for push cart operators, shelters for fire victims, and bail for prisoners.[35] The concerns and services of individual Tammany politicians blunted working-class anger, curbing violent protest, but like Catholic social services, they did not attack the sources of poverty or institute a comprehensive program of change.

Irish American nationalism provided an idealism missing in politics and, to a certain extent, a social justice agenda missing in New York Catholicism. In 1858 Michael Doheny and John O'Mahony, two veterans of the 1848 Young Ireland Rebellion, founded the Fenian Brotherhood, the American wing of the Irish Republican Brotherhood.[36] Fenianism expressed the alienation of bitter people living in ghettos of mind and place and blaming British rule in Ireland for banishing them to a land where they continued to experience Anglo-Protestant nativism.

Because of the movement's failed 1867 uprising in Ireland and unsuccessful invasions of Canada, the hostility of the Grant administration in Washington, and internal factionalism, by 1870 American Fenianism had almost died out. The Clan na Gael took its place as the most effective voice of Irish American nationalism. Jerome J. Collins, science editor of the *New York Herald*, founded the Clan in 1887, but it was Irish Republican Brotherhood exile John Devoy,

a British prison parolee who settled in New York in the 1870s as editor of the *Gaelic American*, who became the Clan's dominant personality.

At its peak, the Clan had about 40,000 members and the emotional and financial backing of many other Irish Americans. Its aspirations and sentiments lay more with the upper-working and middle classes than did Fenianism. Clansmen were hungry for respectability. Many were convinced that Irish Americans had failed to be accepted socially because of Ireland's state of bondage. They believed that if they could liberate Ireland from British colonialism, they would be able to elevate their own status.[37] But the ties between Irish nationalism and Irish Catholicism, and the fanatic Anglophobia of the former, antagonized American elites who viewed Britain as their cultural homeland. Irish nationalism's provocation of American nativism was evident when Irish and German Americans agitated for neutrality in the early stages of World War I. Most Anglo-Americans shared the British view that the 1916 Easter Week rebellion in Dublin was a despicable stab in the back, and few of them sympathized with Ireland's struggle for freedom during the 1919–21 Anglo-Irish War.[38]

Irish American nationalism had important economic and social implications as well. In 1870 Galway native Patrick Ford, infuriated by his experience with anti-Irish nativism in Boston, began publishing the Brooklyn-based *Irish World*, the most widely read and influential Irish American newspaper in the country. Its columns and editorials linked landlordism in Ireland and industrial capitalism in the United States as twin scourges and urged populist revolts against both. Ford complained that the Clan na Gael was too focused on revolutionary republicanism, and that it needed an economic dimension to capture the enthusiasm of Irish peasants and Irish American workers.[39]

Ireland's agricultural depression of the late 1870s gave weight to Ford's position. As a result, the Clan in 1878 formulated its New Departure strategy, which consisted of a campaign against Irish landlordism designed to enlist the support of the rural masses for its ultimate revolutionary objective. Devoy sent Michael Davitt, a Fenian paroled from a British prison who was visiting in the United States, back to Ireland to mobilize and organize farmers for the land war. Davitt founded the National Land League in 1879. Charles Stewart Parnell, a Protestant landlord member of the Irish Parliamentary Party, but a dissenter from the conciliatory policies of its chair, Isaac Butt, decided to offer his services to the league. On Davitt's invitation, Parnell became its president.[40]

The American Land League launched in New York, its many branches, and other Irish American organizations financed the campaign against landlordism. American money, Irish peasant determination and solidarity, and aggressive tactics, mainly economic and social isolation (boycotting) of those who cooperated with landlordism, eventually won out. In 1882 William E. Gladstone's Liberal government conceded fixed tenures, at fair rents, with the free sale of interests in holdings to Irish farmers. This legislation was a major step toward the final solution of the Irish land question, peasant proprietorship.[41]

Parnell used agrarian agitation to capture the leadership of the Irish Parliamentary Party. Much to the consternation of Irish American revolutionary republicans, he used surplus Land League funds and other Irish American financial contributions to support local self-government rather than complete separation from Britain. Most Irish American nationalists affiliated with organizations in favor of home rule, such as the Irish National League of America and its successor the United Irish League of America, which funded the Irish party at Westminster. The Clan na Gael, however, in conjunction with the Irish Republican Brotherhood, upheld the objectives of revolutionary republicanism. John Devoy and others participated in planning the Easter Week rebellion. All of Irish American nationalism rallied to the Sinn Fein cause during the 1919–21 Anglo-Irish War.

In chapter 13 David Brundage argues that the Clan na Gael was radical in its tactics and goals, but conservative in regard to economic and social issues. The New Departure pleaded the case for Irish tenant farmers as a short-range strategy to enlist them for revolutionary republicanism. It was not a long-range program of social justice. Clan leaders were too focused on Ireland to worry about the problems of the American working class. And after the 1880s Catholic pressures stilled the once radical voice of Patrick Ford. At the same time, Irish American home rule nationalists, while fearing socialism, sympathized with trade unionism and the women's suffrage movement.

In Ireland, following the 1890 divorce scandal, the subsequent fall of Parnell, and the nine-year split in the Irish Home Rule Party, a cultural revival captured the emotional and intellectual loyalty of many nationalists. As John T. Ridge explains in chapter 11, the spirit of revival spread to America in the 1890s in the form of county social clubs. Inspired by the Gaelic Athletic Association in Ireland, county teams competed with each other in New York. Chapter 10, by Kenneth Nilsen, reveals a "Hidden Ireland" of close to 80,000 Irish speakers in New York at this time. He discusses Irish language sections of such newspapers as the *Irish American* and the *United Irishman*, as well as Gaelic organizations and Irish language groups all over metropolitan New York. According to Nilsen, Irish-language enthusiasts in the United States anticipated Gaelic League efforts in Ireland.

Concerned with the problem of preserving Irish culture in the United States, Michael J. Logan, an immigrant from Galway and principal of Our Lady of Victory school in Brooklyn, began publishing the *Gael* (*An Gaodhal*) in 1881. It survived until 1904, four years after Logan's death. The *Gael* informed Irish Americans of the richness of Irish art and music and encouraged them to read and study Irish literature and history. From its Brooklyn base the *Gael* reported on Gaelic nationalism activities in Ireland and all over the United States and advertised the existence and times of meetings of organizations involved with the Irish language and culture. In 1890 there were two such organizations in Brooklyn, three in Manhattan, and one in Yonkers.[42]

Irish and Irish American cultural nationalism of the late nineteenth century responded to Anglo-Saxon racism that was popular in academic, political, and journalist circles and among the British and American upper and middle classes. This new version of nativism described Catholic Celts as unstable, emotional, and slavish, badly in need of Anglo-Saxon masters. In its most malicious forms, it insinuated that mentally and physically the Irish had not advanced much beyond apes.[43]

Cultural nationalism did much to instill self-esteem in a people who needed an ego lift. But it also permitted many Irish Americans to escape into a largely romanticized Irish past while ignoring the realities of the American present, thereby increasing rather than diminishing their alienation. Cultural nationalism had a negative effect on the development of Irish American literature in that it postponed honest investigations into and descriptions of Irish American urban misery. It also fostered a narrow-minded provincial approach to art and literature.[44] In 1911 the Abbey Theatre's presentation of John Millington Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* received the same kind of negative reception in New York that it had experienced four years earlier in Dublin. Defensive thin-skinned audiences in both cities could not tolerate the playwright's depiction of the Irish peasantry as less than the idealized spiritual, antimaterialist Gael.

Most of the New York Irish did not flounder in the mists of a Celtic twilight. They directed their energies to more immediate and pressing concerns. Impatient with Tammany's conservative Swallow Tail alliance and its reluctance to respond to working-class issues, Patrick Ford and Father Edward McGlynn, pastor of St. Stephen's parish, supported the 1886 mayoral candidacy of Henry George, the single-tax proponent. George's advocacy of the Land League and close ties to Michael Davitt and Ford gave him many friends in the Irish community. Archbishop Corrigan, however, feared that Catholic workers were under the spell of a pied piper of socialism and ordered McGlynn to withdraw from George's campaign. When the priest refused to obey, Corrigan suspended him, a decision that Rome later reversed.[45] Combined with Tammany voter manipulation, the archbishop's opposition no doubt helped Swallow Tail Abram S. Hewitt win the election. But the 67,000 votes that went to George indicated strong Irish (especially second-generation) and German working-class support. He received 34 percent of the votes in Irish lower and midtown districts.[46]

Clan na Gaelers also challenged Tammany. Devoy and others despised the compromise and the pragmatism of Irish American politics. They also resented the way that Democrats took the Irish vote for granted and advised Irish Americans to cast ballots for pro-Irish nationalism office seekers of any party. In 1884 and 1888 Devoy and his associates endorsed Republican presidential candidates, but by engaging in American politics they shattered many idealistic illusions that surrounded revolutionary republicanism, and they could not compete with politicians closer to and more familiar with the needs of the

people. Irish voters did not have difficulty voting for Henry George, a friend of Ireland, but did so for a party crusading against "rum, Romanism, and rebellion."[47]

Increasingly, Irish Americans turned from politics to the labor movement to redress their economic and social grievances. But their skills in the former meant that they were overrepresented in the upper echelons of the latter. In Chapter 12 John R. McKivigan and Thomas J. Robertson discuss Irish leadership of New York unions, the Knights of Labor, and radical political movements such as the Independent Labor Party, the Socialist Labor Party, and the United Labor Party. The Irish were also prominent in a more conservative expression of working-class consciousness. In 1900 Irish Americans held almost half of American Federation of Labor union presidencies.[48]

More than Tammany political or Catholic values, Irish nationalism inspired Irish American labor radicalism. Boycotting was a contribution of the 1880s Irish land war to the American labor movement. In Ireland the strategy socially ostracized agents of landlordism. In America it was applied through economic sanctions against unfair employers.[49] "Cautious and conservative in local politics, the Irish-controlled building trades set a record for industrial conflict, generating nearly three times as many strikes, boycotts, and sympathy strikes as other industries such as mining."[50]

There was a negative as well as a positive side to the Irish impact on the labor movement. As McKivigan and Robertson point out, early in the nineteenth century Irish stevedores banded together to exclude African American and other ethnics from the docks. They also show how Irish-led unions of the late nineteenth and twentieth century manifested prejudices against non-whites and new immigrants in accepting and rejecting members.

After Tammany survived confrontations with Irish labor and Irish nationalism, its leaders came to realize that they could no longer appease working-class voters with coal, food baskets, and political blarney. Following the lead of Tim Sullivan in the Bowery and Henry Purroy, a city fire commissioner, in the Twenty-Fourth Ward, Tammany established political clubs throughout the city. These groups provided social entertainment, including boat trips and clambakes, for the entire family, and took a close personal interest in neighborhood people. Factionalism in Swallow Tail ranks and social networking enabled Tammany to fight off threats from mavericks, select and mobilize votes for candidates, control them in office, and formulate policies attractive to an essentially proletarian constituency.[51] McKivigan and Robertson emphasize that the conservative urgings of the Catholic Church combined with Tammany patronage of and alliance with organized labor plus its employment of Irish civil servants, policemen, and firemen, as well as some Irish occupational mobility, took the strength out of lingering Irish radicalism.

In 1902 American-born, working-class Charles Francis Murphy took charge of Tammany. Although a conscientious, puritanical Catholic who never cursed

or smoked and seldom drank, Murphy owned four saloons, which functioned as Irish political and social clubs. Although verbally inarticulate, he was a political genius, a master organizer, and a shrewd judge of situations and talent. Alfred E. Smith, a multiterm governor in Albany and pioneer of the New Deal, and Robert F. Wagner, New York's effective and distinguished senator in Washington, were Murphy protégés.

Murphy believed that the government had an obligation to serve the common good and thus to solve economic and social problems. He had more influence in Albany than Kelly or Croker. Friendly governors provided patronage funds for Tammany and vetoed the antimachine bills of hostile legislatures. When many middle-class Protestant opponents of increased assessments moved to the suburbs, Murphy taxed absentee landlords and businesses and applied the income and patronage funds to public works and social welfare programs.[52]

Many journalists and novelists have exaggerated and romanticized the positive side of Irish politics and its power broker significance. Although the political machines may have helped incorporate other ethnics into the system, Tammany clearly reserved the largest share of patronage plums for the Irish, satisfying others with such trinkets as coal, food baskets, and push cart licenses.[53] Under Tammany rule, New York fell far short of paradise and Irish politicians were mostly concerned with their own kind. At the same time, they had a more benevolent attitude toward other Catholics and Jews than did Anglo-Protestants, who conceived of reform in moral rather than in economic or social terms.[54]

The same year that Murphy became Tammany boss, Irish-born John M. Farley succeeded Corrigan as archbishop and later became New York's second cardinal. While far from liberal, he was warmer and more flexible than his predecessor. Farley encouraged the endeavors of priests at St. Joseph's Seminary, at Dunwoodie in Yonkers, one of the few Catholic intellectual centers in the United States. In 1905 Fathers Francis P. Duffy and John F. Brady of the philosophy department started the *New York Review* with the seminary president, Reverend James A. Driscoll, a highly respected theologian, as editor. Its reading audience was small, but the journal represented an important European and American Catholic voice in opposition to a rigid Thomistic philosophy and theology that insisted on a static church impervious to the contemporary world. Like John Henry Cardinal Newman, the *Review*'s editor and writers believed that knowledge of God and his purpose evolved through time. They wanted the church to accept historical development and to come to terms with discoveries and ideas in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. In 1907 Pius X's encyclical, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, condemned as heretical the criticism of neoscholasticism and the effort to bring the church up to date. Farley and other members of the American hierarchy submitted to Rome. Pius X's "reign of terror" against Modernism and intellectualism shut down the *New York Review* in 1908 and forced Driscoll and Duffy out of the seminary into parish work.[55]

Duffy became pastor of Holy Cross in Hell's Kitchen and then the famous chaplain of the Fighting 69th in World War I.

At the turn of the century the New York Irish were still stumbling along the road to American success. They had the highest percentage, 39.3, of unskilled workers in the city, and 25.4 percent were semiskilled. Both groups supplied their brawn to the construction of the East and West Side elevated railways in the 1870s, the building of the Brooklyn Bridge between 1869 and 1883, and the digging of the subway system after 1900. Many Irish men and women remained part of the service economy as waiters, waitresses, hotel employees, bartenders, and domestic servants.[56] The slow pace of occupational mobility perpetuated the social problems of alcoholism, crime, and brutality that victimized Irish individuals and neighborhoods.[57]

Irish bigotry toward other minorities expressed American disappointments, failures, and insecurities. Physically, the Irish resided in the most cosmopolitan of American cities; psychologically, they lived in peasant villages, fearing the unfamiliar. Much of their resentment of Eastern European Jews derived from traditional Christian anti-Semitism, some from jealousy of a people who arrived later and rose faster. Even Patrick Ford's *Irish World* echoed the attacks of American populism on usurious Shylocks.[58] Irish prejudice was not restricted to African Americans and Jews; it was also directed at Italians, who were considered inferior non-English speaking Catholics.[59]

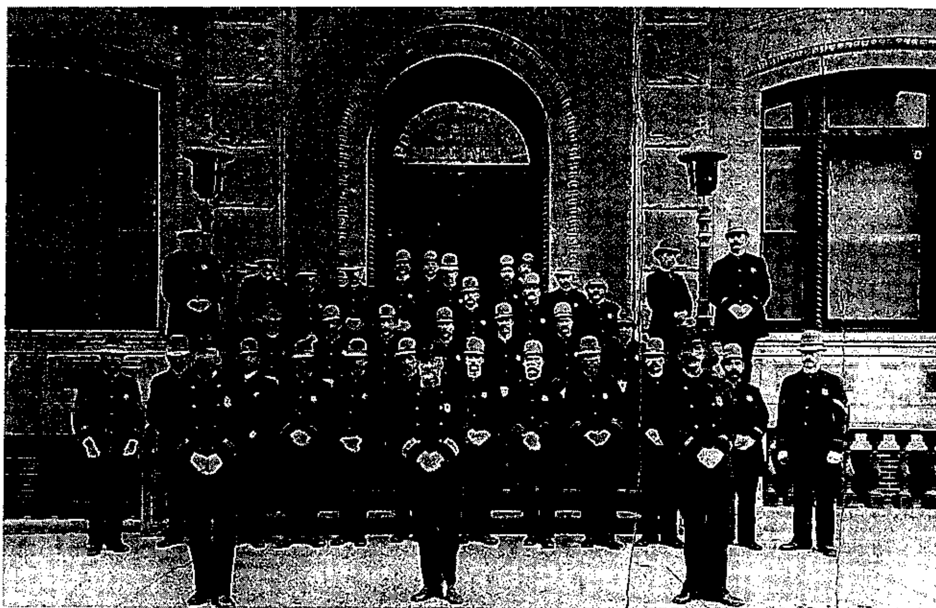
Despite the poverty and social disorder, the sluggish rate of occupational mobility, the moral discipline of Catholicism, and the idealism of nationalism, the situation was getting better for the New York Irish. By 1900 about 23 percent of Irish workers were skilled, second to the German 29.9 percent.[60] On the waterfront, in packing houses, in factories, and on construction sites, they were foremen as well as laborers. On railroads there were fewer Irish navvies and more engineers, firemen, switchmen, levermen, clerks, and telegraphers. Streetcar, elevated railway, and subway riders noticed that quite a few conductors and motormen spoke with a brogue. On building sites, Irish bricklayers, carpenters, plasterers, painters, plumbers, steamfitters, and electricians began to match and then exceed the numbers of diggers and hod carriers. Political power meant that city public works projects went to Irish contractors who employed coethnics in the skilled building trades. They in turn hired unskilled Irish laborers.[61] The distinction between unskilled and skilled became generational, the difference between immigrant greenhorn fathers and narrowback sons.

The security of the civil service greatly attracted people who could still remember poverty, eviction, and famine in Ireland and difficult American adjustments. The Irish staffed the police and fire departments, the post office, and the government bureaucracy. Curiosity, writing skills, the search for adventure, and a hearty drinking tradition drew Irish talent to journalism. From

1890 to 1900 the number of New York Irish in high white-collar occupations grew from 4.3 to 10.3 percent, which was below the German 18.8 percent but above that of New Yorkers with British and Canadian backgrounds.[62]

Irish families provided the Catholic Church with most of its priests, nuns, and brothers. As politics became more connected with law than with saloons—not necessarily a moral improvement—many young men became attorneys. And Irish medical school graduates served the health needs of their people. Between 1870 and 1910 Irish small businesses also increased in number; there were many Irish saloon keepers, Irish-owned grocery, clothing, hardware, and other small shops that catered to neighborhood clienteles.

Nuns, many from Ireland, taught in parochial schools, nursed in Catholic hospitals, and operated orphanages and sanitariums. They were role models for young Irish lay women who were in the vanguard of an advancing New York Irish community. Daughters of mothers who had been domestic servants or who had worked in factories, mills, or the garment industry sweatshops became teachers and nurses. In 1900 American women with Irish-born parents exceeded the "combined total of all female teachers with English or German parents."[63] Eight years later, fathers of 20.7 percent of New York's



The opening of a new police station at 153 East 67th Street was the occasion for a formal portrait in November 1887. The 25th Precinct covered the blocks from Fifth Avenue to the East River between 57th and 79th Streets, a ward that in 1890 was 26 percent Irish by birth or descent. The neighborhood cop was one of the most visible "Irish" occupations in late-nineteenth-century New York City, partly because of Tammany influence and partly because of the 95 percent literacy rate among Irish immigrants. (From the collection of Anne T. Murphy.)

public school teachers had been born in Ireland.[64] Nuns and the women they taught and inspired achieved leadership positions as school principals, college presidents, and hospital directors. They were America's first group of professional women.[65]

With rising incomes and expectations, many Irish families in the upper-working and lower middle class deserted their old neighborhoods for new ones in Manhattan's Upper East and West Side and the Bronx. In Brooklyn they left the vicinity of the Navy Yard for Flatbush and other residential areas. Ambitious families sent their sons to St. John's College (renamed Fordham in 1907) in the Bronx to be educated by the Jesuits, to the Christian Brothers at Manhattan College, to the Vincentians at St. John's College in Brooklyn, or to the Franciscans at St. Francis College, also in Brooklyn. They enrolled their daughters in the Sisters of Charity's College of Mount Saint Vincent in Riverdale. Young women from affluent families attended Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart. But most Irish women trained for professions in teacher's colleges or in hospital nursing programs.

Show business and sports featured Irish performers and athletes. They entertained and released the frustrations of the general public. They also served as ethnic heroes. Urban poverty and adversity bred strong, hard, and bitter young naturals for the boxing ring. Until Joe Louis in the 1930s, the Irish dominated that violent sport. At the turn of the century they also were closely associated with baseball, the national pastime. With Bill McGunnigle as manager and players named Collins, Burns, O'Brien, Corkhill, Daly, and Terry, the Brooklyn Dodgers won the National League pennant in 1890. In 1899 and 1900 they again were champions when McGann, Daly, Casey, Keeler (Wee Willie), Kelley, Farrel, Jennings, McGuire, Dunn, Hughes, Kennedy, McJames, and McGinnity played for manager Ned Hanlon. In 1904 John J. McGraw managed the National League champion New York Giants. A year later they won the World Series, defeating Connie Mack's Philadelphia Athletics. McGraw had McGann, Devlin, Donlin, Shannon, Browne, Bresnahan, McCormick, Donlin, and McGinnity in the starting line up. The McGraw-led Giants won National League pennants in 1911, 1912, and 1913, with the assistance of players Doyle, Devlin, Murray, and Burns. The Giants owned but shared the Polo Grounds with the New York Yankees, a team that also featured a number of Irish Americans.[66] Because baseball was the country's most popular sport, closely linked to the mythical image of a rural Protestant nation, Irish players came to represent American adaptability and their skills in this arena gave them a more acceptable persona than boxing prowess. But athleticism also reinforced nativist opinion that the Irish were strong of back but weak of mind.

Irish American actors, dancers, singers, acrobats, and comedians appeared on vaudeville stages and in theaters. In plays and comedy sketches the Irish were evolving into more acceptable representatives of their people than the Paddys and Biddys of former days. People were laughing with, rather than at, them.

Dublin-born playwright and actor Dion Boucicault (1820–90) settled in New York and had an important impact on the development of American theater. His work influenced George M. Cohan, the Irish American king of Broadway.[67] Boucicault's Irish plays *The Colleen Bawn* (1860), *Arrah-na-Pogue* (1864), *The O'Dowd* (1873), and *The Shaughraun* (1874) remained popular with New York audiences into the twentieth century. His peasants were witty not foolish, courageous without being violent, and intelligent instead of ignorant or stupid. In clever ways, they outsmarted landlords, constables, and British officials. Boucicault's plays were pro-nationalist, but inoffensive to Anglo-Protestants in the audience.

The sketches that Edward Harrigan and Tony Hart (Anthony Cannon) wrote and performed from the 1870s through the 1890s, included songs composed by Harrigan and his father-in-law, David Braham. They depicted New York's Irish in humorous yet sympathetic interactions among themselves and with other ethnics. Despite their foibles, Harrigan's and Hart's characters were likable, hard-working, and decent people.[68]

In addition to the comic songs of Harrigan and Braham, other forms of music celebrated Irish America. In 1906 the great Irish tenor John McCormack began to make records. They and his concerts popularized Irish music in theaters and drawing rooms as well as in music halls. McCormack's renditions of Thomas Moore's *Melodies* advanced the Irish quest for respectability. Chauncey Olcott (1860–1932), an actor-singer, wrote plays filled with songs, many of his own, about Irish subjects. He tried them out in Irish Brooklyn and Bronx neighborhoods before taking them to Broadway. The lyrics Olcott pleasantly sang were sentimental and romantic, and about the Irish icons of home and mother, but they appealed to the Irish upper working and middle classes, as well as to other Americans. He popularized "When Irish Eyes are Smiling" and "Mother Machree." They still thrill some Irish hearts.

Songwriters of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries found the Irish good subject material and treated them favorably.[69] An interesting question is why the "hard-working, disciplined, sober, competitive, Protestant America of the early twentieth century [bought] into the image of the light-hearted, home-loving, quick tempered but genial, sentimental, loyal, extravagant, hard-drinking, Irish, who dared to love Ireland as much as America." The answer perhaps lies in the timing: "In the early decades of the twentieth century, as the culture of the factory and office reshaped the American character, the popular image of the Irish represented an alternative to the white-collar, organization man of the new urban business culture. The Irish of the popular songs had come to embody simple, old fashioned virtues: simple, romantic love, as opposed to sex: mother love and filial piety; geniality and neighborliness; hard work and hard play; loyalty and patriotism. The more America changed, the more Ireland and Irishness became repositories for the qualities that might be lost."[70]

George M. Cohan was a personification of Irishness that other Americans appreciated. The son of vaudevillians, Cohan became the most famous and successful combination of actor, singer, dancer, songwriter, and playwright in the United States. His work was filled with Irish wit, humor, and exuberance and unabashed American patriotism. During World Wars I and II, Cohan's songs lifted the morale of American servicemen and civilians and increased their love of country. Other Irish Americans shared his view that no matter what some others might think, they were red, white, and blue Yankee Doodle Dandys.[71]

After passing through Ellis Island, my father went to work in one of the Butler grocery stores, found a place to live in an Irish widow's crowded Hell's Kitchen rooming house, sharing space with old Cavan friends and new ones from other Irish counties. He quickly became a staunch Democrat, a dedicated union member, and a baseball fan. He improved his economic situation by taking a job as a streetcar conductor, but in 1916 lost it to scab labor in a transit workers' strike. In search of a new one, he dug ditches in Lynn, Massachusetts, and eventually found his way to Chicago, where he worked in packing houses, steel mills, the Pullman company plant, and finally ended up as a lever man on the railroad.

My father considered his New York introduction to urban America the most exciting period of his life. During World War II, when I would return home on leave from Coast Guard duties in New York, he would grill me for hours about the places he formerly frequented. In the late 1950s he revisited them personally.

From my father and other Irish immigrants of his time, I learned that their experience in a Protestant nativist country, propelled by competitive industrial capitalism, was difficult. Frequently they nostalgically recalled the relaxed pace of Catholic, agrarian Ireland, but not for long. Unlike the culturally dysfunctional exiles that inhabit the pages of Kerby Miller's *Emigrants and Exiles,* the overwhelming majority of Irish immigrants in New York and other American cities knew that the United States liberated them from the dreary, static life of rural Ireland.[72] Urban America was a formidable challenge, but one full of adventure and promise. In it Irish Americans found a permanent niche as labor leaders, professionals, athletes, and entertainers, and as decent, hard-working family men and women. Many had the opportunity to see their daughters and sons rise to heights unthinkable in the Ireland they left.

My father insisted that his children be Irish; his lessons in Irish history were continual. But he frequently said to me: "You know I love Ireland, but never forget that America is the greatest country in the world." In the transitional period, 1877–1914, most of the New York Irish were beginning to have the same opinion.