The "Dead Rabbit"-Bowery Boy Riot: An Analysis of the Antebellum New York Gang

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THE "DEAD RABBIT"-BOWERY BOY RIOT:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE ANTEBELLUM NEW YORK GANG

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART ONE: THE RIOTS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: The Metropolitan Police,</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperance, and the Sixth Ward Riots</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART TWO: THE GANG AND THE SIXTH WARD</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: The Gang and the Crowd</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: The Gang and Ward Life</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: The Evolution of the Gang</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix II</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix III</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix IV</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MAPS**

| Map 1: The Sixth Ward                        | 5    |
| Map 2: Ireland                               | 120  |
| Map 3: Clustering of People from County      | 142  |
| Kerry in "Five Points" Area of the Sixth Ward, 1853-1857 |       |
INTRODUCTION

Urban historians have often perceived the mid-nineteenth century as the era of the street gang. The violence of antebellum city life, in this view, at least partly resulted from the activity of marauding gangs that terrorized the immigrant wards and fought viciously in the streets. The incident historians have cited most often to illustrate the gang in New York is the so-called "Dead Rabbit"-Bowery Boy Riot which occurred in the Sixth Ward on July 4th, 1857 and continued on the next day. Descriptions of this riot usually portrayed the city suspended in a state of terror as gangs composed of hoodlums and drunken Irishmen battled for control of the streets, the police helpless to stop the mayhem as decent citizens feared for New York's fate. Although each successive tale of the riot in some way contradicted the previous version, most of the descriptions concurred about the gangs' depravity: typical denizens of the Sixth Ward, home of the infamous Five Points with its criminals and poor Irish.

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2Some of the major secondary sources relating the story of the riot at some length are: Herbert Asbury, The Gangs of New York: An Informal History of the Underworld (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927; reprint ed., New York:
The "Dead Rabbit"-Bowery Boy Riot was one of the few occasions when contemporary newspapers and observers commented extensively on New York City gangs, yet until Paul Weinbaum's article in 1975, "Temperance, Politics, and the New York City Riots of 1857," such evidence had not been explored with a critical eye. However, although Weinbaum clarified the riot as a response to new police and temperance laws passed by the state legislature which interfered with local political control in the Irish Sixth Ward (and social activity in the German Seventeenth Ward which rioted the following weekend), he did not extend his analysis very far into the role of the gangs in Sixth Ward life.


For an era of New York City history purportedly characterized by gangs and violence, little is still known about the content of these voluntary organizations or the quality of their behavior. The "Dead Rabbit"-Bowery Boy Riot remains an important instance of gang activity open to analysis. This paper first explores the riot with the gang as its major focus of attention. The controversy leading up to the violence is only briefly described, since the circumstances and motivations of its different actors and parties have been adequately examined elsewhere. The riot is more extensively discussed because it has never received the critical attention it deserves, both as to its detail as

well as to the contradictory nature of contemporary press coverage. In the second part, the riot crowd and the gangs' participation is analyzed with the aim of seeing how much one can learn about the "Dead Rabbits" and Bowery Boys from contemporary evidence. Then, the gangs' relationship to different aspects of life in the Sixth Ward is examined: the gang and its role in local and city politics, the gang and its relationship to Ireland (where many of its members originated), and the effects industrialization in the ward had on gang organization. Within this analysis, other aspects of Sixth Ward social activity will be investigated and compared with both nineteenth- and twentieth-century views of this "notorious" working-class and predominantly Irish area. In conclusion, the transitional quality of the gang--its change over time--will be explored.
1. The Five Points
2. Paradise Park
3. Five Pes. House of Industry
4. Mission House & Methodist Church
5. Church of Transfiguration
6. St. Andrew's Roman Cath. Church
7. Presbyterian Church
8. St. Phillip's Episcopal Church
9. Beth Israel Synagogue
10. St. Matthew's Lutheran Church
11. Metropolitan Police Headquarters
12. Municipal Police Station House
13. "Tombs"—Halls of Justice & Prison
14. New York City Arsenal
15. New York Dispensary
16. No. 40 Bowery
17. Bowery Theater
18. N.Y. & New Haven Railroad Depot
19. Railroad Freight Depots
20. Ironworks
21. Atlantic Hose Co. 14
22. Hope Hose Co. 50 (Approx. Location)
23. Fulton Engine Co. 21 (Approx. Location)
24. Protector Engine Co. 22 (Approx. Location)
25. U.S. Hose Co. 25 (Approx. Location)
26. Peace Hose Co. 28 (Approx. Location)
27. Mutual Hose & Ladder Co. 1 (Approx. Location)

PART ONE: The Riots

They had a dreadful fight upon last Saturday night,
The papers gave the news accordin;
Guns, pistols, clubs and sticks, hot water and old bricks,
Which drove them on the other side of Jordan.

CHORUS

Then pull off the coat and roll up the sleeve,
For Bayard is a hard street to travel;
So pull off the coat and roll up the sleeve,
The Bloody Sixth is a hard ward to travel I believe.

"S(121,457),(855,767)
CHAPTER ONE

THE METROPOLITAN POLICE, TEMPERANCE,
AND THE SIXTH WARD RIOTS

On April 15th and 16th of 1857 two laws were passed in the New York State legislature which were complementary to one another and would have an important affect on the administration of New York City. The first law was the Metropolitan Police Act which was created in part to enforce the second, an act "to suppress intemperance, and to regulate the sale of intoxicating liquors," the so-called Liquor Excise Law which reduced the number of licensed saloons, regulated the amount a person could drink, and banned the sale of liquor on Sunday.¹

For years New York temperance advocates had attempted to imitate the 1851 Maine law which prohibited the sale of liquor in that state. In 1853, a "Maine Law" was defeated in the New York State Assembly by a margin of two votes. The "Maine Law" advocates entered the autumn election campaign with the aim of defeating their opponents, and the Whig triumph of 1853 was partially due to the efforts of the temperance proponents. With the opening of

¹Board of Aldermen of the City of New York, Documents (1857), Vol. XXIV, No. 9, pp. 110-124 (temperance law), 150-175 (Metropolitan Police law).
the 1854 legislative session, state senator Myron Clark and his select committee on liquor traffic set to work, and by March a prohibition law had been passed. However, the bill was subsequently vetoed by Governor Horatio Seymour in a controversial decision which reflected both Seymour's political concerns and the ineptitude of the legislators' drafting. With this second defeat, the temperance forces entered the 1854 gubernatorial contest and succeeded in getting Clark nominated as the Whig candidate. Clark won in a very close race (while Democratic anti-temperance forces won overwhelmingly in New York City with a heavy immigrant turn-out).

In April, 1855 the legislature passed a third law, this one prohibiting the sale of liquor except for "mechanical, chemical and medicinal purposes." However the triumph of "Maine Law" advocates was short-lived: in 1856 the Court of Appeals ruled the law unconstitutional. It was within the power of the legislature to outlaw the sale of liquor, the judges determined, but the law did not distinguish between property obtained before it went into effect and after, the seizure and confiscation of liquor thus violating the due process clause of the state constitution. Furthermore, the law violated the accused's right to a trial by jury since it provided that all liquor cases be tried in the Court of Special Sessions.²

The temperance advocates' joy over passage of the modified "Maine Law" in 1857 must have been tempered by their knowledge of attempts by local political forces in the state to circumvent the earlier prohibition laws. Perhaps the most glaring example was Mayor Fernando Wood of New York City. Wood had had to tread carefully, for he needed the continued support of both the city's reform elements who favored temperance and the Democratic party regulars who opposed it. With the passage of the 1855 act, he had first pledged to enforce the law until the appeals court reached a decision. However, Wood quickly reversed himself, pointing to inadequacies in the law which ostensibly left him open to prosecution. The law, Wood stated, did not give him clear enforcement authority, and thus any destruction of liquor could leave him (and any police officers who enforced the law) open to lawsuits. The city's District Attorney quickly followed with a decision supporting the Mayor's refusal to enforce Sunday closings provided in the law. He ruled that the period between the expiration of the old 1825 law governing liquor licenses and the start of the new, a period of over two months, did not permit the mayor to revoke liquor licenses. This decision allowed saloons and other establishments to operate without licenses. Mayor Wood's relationship to temperance legislation was clearly one of creative opposition. Although he alienated many reformers who had previously supported him, Wood delighted Tammany regulars and added the support of Germans to his already
solid base among the Irish voters of the city.  

The Metropolitan Police Act, with a provision to enforce the Sunday-closing and liquor-licensing laws, was at least partly created with Fernando Wood in mind. Wood began his first term as mayor with several reform measures which surprised and delighted temperance advocates and other reformers who had opposed his election. He quickly took action against prostitution, gambling, and violations of the Sabbath laws, insisted on personally supervising all areas of city government, increased the efficiency of street-sweeping, recommended the creation of a free academy, and placed the police in uniform. Throughout his first term he constantly pointed to the necessity of being a strong mayor if the city was to be run efficiently, and warned against the threat of state interference in city affairs. But, as Leonard Chalmers has pointed out, these "flashes of vision and disinterestedness ... were too quickly extinguished," and soon the selective nature of Wood's reforms became evident.


4 Richardson, New York Police, pp. 82-96; Chalmers, "Fernando Wood and Tammany Hall," pp. 383-385; M. R. Werner,
Wood's handling of the New York City police department was a case in point. Although, according to an 1853 law, the police department was supposed to be administered by a three-man commission composed of the Mayor, the City Recorder and a judge, Wood held virtual control through his influence over Recorder Smith. Even with this power Wood had early on called for an amendment to the law placing the police under his direct control which, he claimed, would remove the department from partisan considerations. A bill produced by the state legislature in the spring of 1855, calling for the transfer of control over the police from the city to the state, was vehemently opposed by the Mayor; he received support from reformers like Horace Greeley, John Gerard and Peter Cooper, who were still enamored of his "model" image. The law never was voted on, but attacks against Wood for partisan use of the police and internal manipulation of the department began to appear. His reform image was tarnishing rapidly. The Board of Aldermen demanded the names of all the men appointed to the police department since the beginning of 1855, the names of those who had not been reappointed and why, and the names of all dismissed officers. Wood refused to comply, but did respond to an investigation held by a special committee of the state legislature in December of 1855. Among other improprieties,

the committee learned that of 246 policemen appointed in 1855, 143 had Irish names, indicating a clear bias in hiring practices in favor of Wood's Irish Democratic supporters. The special committee released a report in March, 1856 recommending the reorganization of the police department to a board of elected commissioners; but again the bill failed to pass, lacking the votes to get it past Democratic opposition in the state legislature. The 1856 election, however, drastically changed circumstances in favor of passage of a reform measure. The mayoral campaign was characterized by Wood's overt manipulation of the police department, replacing policemen who were known to favor the Whigs or Native-Americans with Irish Democrats, and demanding contributions from station-houses under threat of punishment. Furthermore, on election day the Mayor gave the police several hours furlough and warned them only to appear at polling places to vote. Election day was, not too surprisingly, a violent occasion; a riot took place in the Sixth Ward, for example, involving four to five hundred people. Wood was re-elected, winning through a combination of fraud, gliding on the coat tails of James Buchanan, and the dedicated support of his Irish constituents (the largely Irish Sixth Ward giving him 2,107 votes to 724 for all other parties). But, while the Democrats had triumphed in New York, the Republicans won the gubernatorial race with John A. King's victory, and now controlled the state assembly. The passage of a Metropolitan Police Act was now virtually assured, the
Republican and Know-Nothing state legislature opposing the Democratic-run city of New York.⁵

On April 15th, 1857 the Metropolitan Police Act was passed in the New York State Assembly. In the ensuing four months after its introduction the law had changed form. In January, the bill had been introduced with the blessings of Governor King, calling for the appointment of three commissioners by him for the New York City police. However, the Attorney-General of the state issued a report stating that the act as then written violated the constitution by designating the Governor to appoint a local official not provided for in the constitution (which stipulated that such a local official was to be elected by voters or selected by local authorities of a city, town or county). The legislature thereupon extended the Metropolitan Police District beyond Manhattan to include Brooklyn, Staten Island and Westchester County. This extension of the police district over several city and county lines allowed the Governor to appoint commissioners since his jurisdiction covered a section of the state, if not such appointments in a specific locality. The

⁵Richardson, New York Police, pp. 82-96; Chalmers, "Fernando Wood and Tammany Hall," passim; "Report of Majority of Committee on Cities and Villages on bills relative to Police Departments of New-York and Brooklyn," Assembly of the State of New York, Documents (80th Session), Vol. II, No. 127, 2 March 1857; Pleasants, Fernando Wood of New York, pp. 53-54, 58; M. R. Werner, Tammany Hall (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1928), pp. 80-85; Wilbur R. Miller, Jr., "The Legitimation of the London and New York City Police, 1830-1870" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1973), p. 91 (See Table 1, p. 121, showing the nativity of the population and police by ward in 1855, indicating a clear Irish predominance).
law was passed after a series of cursory hearings, providing for five commissioners to be appointed by the Governor, plus the Mayors of New York and Brooklyn, making a total of seven commissioners. The new law changed the old residency requirements which had stipulated that police officers serve in a ward in which they had resided for at least five years. Under the new law, a police officer need only reside somewhere in the police district (i.e., Brooklyn, Manhattan, Westchester or Staten Island). The Common Councils of Brooklyn and New York were to provide for the expenses of the Metropolitan Police force, including its accommodations and jails. The old ward boundaries for police districts were to be broken up into precincts with no regard for the previous borders. The Metropolitan districts were to raise and collect taxes for the needs of the new police, the funds going directly into the state treasury. Titles which had been previously used in the police department were changed to their English equivalents, in emulation of the London police force. Finally, the Metropolitanans were instructed to preserve order at elections and to enforce the new Sunday-closing and temperance laws.6

6Bd. of Aldermen, Documents (1857), Vol. XXIV, No. 9, pp. 150-175; Richardson, New York Police, pp. 96-99; Miller, "Legitimation of the London and New York City Police," p. 92. Miller notes that previous police policy like the old residency requirement was anathema to those reformers wishing to emulate the London police system: "This provision, which made the patrolman into a local figure probably known to his neighbors before he joined the force, contrasted with the London Commissioners' concern to prevent 'improper connections' between policemen and local residents" (119).
As soon as the Metropolitan Police Act was passed, Wood signed a City Council resolution which denounced the new law and instructed the old police board—composed of the Mayor, City Recorder and a judge—to obstruct the new commissioners by continuing in its post. He ordered the city police, the Municipals, to obey only him and threatened to remove any policeman who recognized the authority of the new commissioners. The Metropolitan Police law was unconstitutional, Wood stated, since it disenfranchised New Yorkers from the right of selecting their own representatives. On the basis of this home-rule argument and the partisan nature of Governor King's selection of commissioners—all Republicans—Wood gained the support of many city reformers and newspapers ordinarily not sympathetic with him. He received the full support of the Irish-American press which treated the temperance and Metropolitan Police laws as one, denouncing their "monarchical" qualities.7

Wood brought suit in the state Supreme Court, which ruled the Metropolitan Police law constitutional on May 25th.

7Richardson, New York Police, pp. 100-102; see the protest issued to the state legislature by the Board of Aldermen in Documents (1857), Vol. XXIV, No. 10, 14 May 1957. For Irish opposition to the police bill, see Florence E. Gibson, The Attitudes of the New York Irish Toward State and National Affairs, 1848-1892 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), pp. 99-100; for attacks on Republican "despotism," see for example the Irish News, 2 May 1857 and 9 May 1957:
"The recent high-handed attempts to feudalise our cities, virtually abrogate the franchise and invest the Governor of the State with imperial authority, must be boldly and promptly repelled. The new Police Bill and the Excise Law are specimens of despotic legislation which Louis Napoleon, with his legion of spies, a garroted press and an army of mercenary bayonets at his back, would hardly attempt in Paris."
The mayor then immediately took the case to the Court of Appeals. In the meantime Wood, with the cooperation of the Democratic-controlled Board of Supervisors, was able to have the old colonial charters resurrected which provided for a day and night watch, and on June 2nd the Municipal Police was reinstated to be controlled by the old commissioners. Now there were two official police forces contending with each other, one with a commitment to the Governor and one to the Mayor. Those police in the city who had been appointed before April 15th, 1857, the date of the passage of the Metropolitan Police Act, now had to choose between police forces. Approximately eight hundred policemen and fifteen captains opted for Wood's Municipals, while three hundred men and seven captains allied themselves with the Metropolitans. The city was thus broken up into wards with Municipal or Metropolitan station-houses, depending on the political allegiance of the policemen, the Democratic Municipals most preponderant in the lower immigrant wards. Some wards, like the Fifth, were split, the factions constantly vying for control of the station-house. Police efficiency diminished rapidly as Municipal or Metropolitan police made arrests only to have their prisoners rescued by members of the rival police force. Reportedly, the rate of crimes increased with the disorganization of the department.8

8 Richardson, New York Police, pp. 103-104; George W. Walling, Recollections of a New York Chief of Police (New York: Caxton Book Concern, Ltd., 1887), p. 56; New York
The conflict between rival police forces culminated in a battle on the steps of City Hall on June 16th. In a dispute between state authorities and Wood over the appointment of a successor to the Street Commissioner who had recently died, the state appointee was ejected from City Hall after attempting to take his post. A warrant was issued for the Mayor's arrest and was immediately delivered by a Metropolitan police captain. He too was expelled, but a reinforcing body of some fifty Metropolitans appeared in the meantime. This force was confronted on the steps of City Hall by a group of Municipal police purportedly ten times their number and aided by gang members from the neighboring Five Points, according to George Templeton Strong, a "miscellaneous assortment of suckers, soaplocks, Irishmen, and plug uglies." A battle ensued and the Metropolitan force was routed. The Seventh Regiment of the National Guard was in the process of marching down Broadway toward the harbor where they were to board a ship for Boston. The Metropolitans stopped them and the Seventh Regiment surrounded City Hall and successfully arrested Wood, who was quickly released. The next day, the Mayor and Governor King met and agreed to have the two forces jointly patrol the

City, City Clerk, Filed Papers, "Complaints Against Policemen, 1856-1857," Box 3214, File 1 in the New York City Municipal Archives, which lists the suspensions of policemen by ward for recognizing the authority of the Metropolitan Police Commissioners (I am indebted to John Kolp for bringing this information to my attention); Weinbaum, "Temperance, Politics, and the New York City Riots," p. 248.
city until the Court of Appeals decision, but the feuding continued. Wood was subsequently sued by injured Metropolitans for a total of $13,000 which he never paid.\textsuperscript{9}

The Court of Appeals decision came on July 2nd. Wood and his supporters had been confident in an outcome in their favor with the preponderance of Democrats in the court. But, the decision was in favor of the Metropolitan Police Act by a majority of six to two.\textsuperscript{10} On the afternoon of July 3rd, Wood disbanded the Municipals. There was great bitterness on the part of many Municipal policemen and their supporters over the loss of jobs and the likelihood that


"It ["the present civil war"] has been gradually growing up and taking definite form as a conflict of authorities ever since the last legislature passed the New Police Bill in order to take power out of the paws of Mayor Wood and get it into those of the other scoundrels at Albany. We have had two hostile bodies of police for some time and collision has been predicted, but I've concerned myself little, being quite indifferent as between the two gangs; waiting with perfect resignation for the Court of Appeals to decide which horde has the legal right to be supported by public plunder." (Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas, eds., The Diary of George Templeton Strong, The Turbulent Fifties, 1850-1859 (New York: Macmillan, 1952), p. 342).

\textsuperscript{10}For the court's decision and the opinions of the judges, see New York Daily Tribune, 3 July 1857; New York Daily Times, 2 July 1857; New York Herald, 3 July 1857.
many police would never receive their salaries for June since the force had not been recognized by the state. The Metropolitan commissioners refused to rehire Municipals, even though the new force at first would be drastically undermanned. The station-houses and police telegraphs were still in the possession of Municipals, a last directive by the Mayor in continuing to attempt to undermine the Metropolitans' authority. The Metropolitans consisted of only about five hundred to six hundred men, and on Friday evening over two hundred special policemen were sworn in and furnished with badges and billyclubs. Many of the Metropolitans and all the special policemen had had little experience and would begin patrolling on perhaps the most riotous holiday of the year, July 4th, which usually witnessed some violence. Furthermore, Superintendant Talmadge issued an order directing that July 5th would be the first day the new liquor law went into effect, and he expected strict enforcement. Concerned with the anger the Municipal defeat had engendered, a force of from fifty to one hundred policemen were kept at Metropolitan Police headquarters situated on White Street in the Sixth Ward, adjacent to an Irish Catholic area which had solidly supported Wood.\(^\text{11}\)

\(^{11}\)Ibid., 4, 6 July 1857; "Report of the Commissioners of the Metropolitan Police," Assembly of the State of New York, Documents (81st Session), Vol. III, No. 80 (Talmadge order); Weinbaum, "Temperance, Politics and the New York City Riots," p. 250. According to the New York Herald, 4 July 1857, the Metropolitan Commissioners were not hiring many Irishmen, only accepting the few who claimed allegiance to the Republican Party.
The city's officials had feared that the festivities planned for the Fourth of July might be ruined by "almost incessant" rain which had been pouring from the sky since Monday, June 29th. However, it appears that by late Friday night the rain had stopped, the temperature remaining at a cool 52 degrees.  

The "Dead Rabbit"-Bowery Boy Riot

At about 1:30 on the morning of July 4th, a crowd of young men and boys attacked two or three Metropolitan policemen who were patrolling near the Bowery Theater. The police fled from their attackers, at least one of them running into a saloon, No. 40 Bowery, owned by one Ezra White and allegedly the headquarters of a gang called the Bowery Boys. The crowd followed, but the inhabitants of the bar drove it back while the police escaped through the rear.  

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13 New York Daily Tribune, 6 July 1857; New York Daily Times, 13 July 1857 (a letter signed, "Un Qui Sait") which names one of the policemen as Florentine, residing in Mulberry Street and appointed as a special; New York Herald, 6 July 1857 names the policeman Abraham Florentine of the 6th Precinct, as does the New York Evening Post, 6 July 1857. Interestingly, Florentine never appeared at the Coroner's Inquest, or in any other records pertaining to the riot. The exact ownership and status of No. 40 Bowery is another matter remaining in dispute: The Daily Times, 6 November 1856 noted that Patrick Matthews, then running for Councilman in the Sixth Ward, was a leader of the Bowery Boys, an employee of the Customs House, and keeper of a "porter-house" in the Bowery. Throughout the riot coverage he is listed as residing at No. 40. However, Trow's New York City Directory (New York: J. F. Trow, 1856, 1857) listed Ezra B. White as owning stables on the corner of Elizabeth and Bayard Streets and a liquor store at No. 40 Bowery.
The invaders were apparently driven back into the street from where they proceeded to bombard No. 40 with bricks, cobblestones and rocks, breaking all the windows of the establishment. The saloon's occupants returned a fire of tumblers and glasses. Some time during this battle, the crowd turned upon another Metropolitan policeman who had subsequently come upon the scene. He fled into McCluskey's "coffee and cake saloon," no. 36, which the crowd also stoned. Soon the attackers either simply moved on or were driven off by a reinforcing body of Bowery Boys who had somehow learned of the fight.\textsuperscript{14}

At some time during or after the battle, some observers decided the attackers were members of the Mulberry Street Gang or "Dead Rabbits." Since no one in the crowd was identified as being a member of that gang--no one, for that matter, was identified at all--it is unclear how this conclusion was reached. However, all the newspapers and official chroniclers of the event described the attack on the Metropolitans as perpetrated by the "Dead Rabbits," perhaps basing the accusation on general knowledge that that gang was purportedly an ardent supporter of Mayor Wood.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14} New York Daily Times, 6 July 1857; Supreme Court, New York County, Coroner's Inquisitions, Box 7914 in the New York City Municipal Archives, Testimony of Richard Quinn, William H. Smith (special policeman chased into No. 36), and Charles Francis (who noted at least two fights in the vicinity from 1:45 to 3:30 A.M.), 6 July 1857; New York Daily Tribune, 6, 7 July 1857; New York Herald, 6 July 1857.

\textsuperscript{15} In regard to the name of the attacking gang, ex-Alderman Charles Francis' inquest testimony is revealing. He
The next major disturbance did not take place until late in the afternoon of the Fourth. At about five o'clock word reached the Metropolitan headquarters in White Street that several police had been attacked by an angry Irish crowd in the Seventh Ward. Thirty men, almost all special

was one of the many witnesses who referred to the "Dead Rabbits" primarily as the "Mulberry Street Boys," although the newspapers emphasized the former name. He stated he didn't know any "Dead Rabbits," either by name or sight, and had "never heard the name until the Fourth of July." He was a long-time resident of the neighborhood (Coroner's Inquisitions, Testimony, 6 July 1857). In the New York Herald version of his testimony (7 July 1857), Francis mentioned that some of the crowd started to stone Moss' Hotel on the corner of Bayard Street, but others stopped them. This denotes more of a goal-directed action than an anarchic attack. In this regard, see George Rudé's analysis of the discriminating violence of pre-industrial urban crowds in The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730-1848 (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964), pp. 59-61.

16 There were other disturbances late Friday night and early Saturday morning: At about 10 P.M., several Metropolitans were attacked in Worth Street, near Cow Bay. They retreated to the White Street headquarters and returned to the area with reinforcements. A fight ensued with the police taking two prisoners (New York Daily Times, 4 July 1857). At about 12:30 A.M. several special policemen were stoned near Chatham and Mulberry Streets after they had broken up a fight and arrested one man. One of the policemen, Thomas Sparks, died several days later from head wounds received in this incident. In inquest testimony, the "Dead Rabbits" were labelled as the culprits but no one was identified, nor was evidence presented explaining how the police knew the assailants belonged to the gang (Daily Times, 11 July 1857). In inquest testimony, special policeman Thomas Slowey also reported being attacked and harassed by roving gangs of young men early Saturday morning. Robert (or Thomas) C. Brown was attacked at 5 A.M. while walking down Chatham Street toward the Battery to see the firing of the salute. His assailants later apologized for the assault, saying they had thought he and his friends were Bowery Boys. In this case, the suspicion that these men were "Dead Rabbits" seems more firmly based (Inquest Testimony, 6 July 1857; New York Daily Tribune, 7 July 1857).
police, were immediately sent out. This force took a route
down White Street into Baxter and turned into Bayard Street,
where they came upon a fight between two men. A large crowd
of men, women and children had gathered to watch the fray.
The Metropolitans may have attempted to intervene in the
fight, or their sudden appearance may have simply alarmed
the largely Irish crowd. In either case, the police became
the focus of a concerted attack, bombarded by objects thrown
by the people in the street and in the surrounding houses.
It is possible that the Metropolitans were chased down
Bayard Street toward the Bowery (into alleged Bowery Boy
territory); but, most likely, they were separated, some
being surrounded and pelted by the crowd while others
escaped. It was at this point that a large force of Bowery
Boys appeared, coming to the aid of the beleaguered police.
The battle continued, now between the Bayard Street crowd
and the Bowery Boys while the Metropolitans retreated. As
it has been usually labelled, the battle between the "Dead
Rabbits" and the Bowery Boys was under way. 17

17 The afternoon riot has been reconstructed from:
New York Daily Tribune, 6 July 1857; New York Daily Times,
6, 13 July 1857; New York Herald, 6 July 1857; New York
Evening Post, 6 July 1857; Irish-American, 14 July 1857;
Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly, 18 July 1857; Coroner's
Inquisitions, 6-10 July 1857 (and the reporting of the
inquests in the Daily Times, Daily Tribune and Herald
throughout the week after the riot). According to several
accounts, after the Saturday morning attack on 40 Bowery,
the Bowery Boys believed there would be another and greater
attack later in the day. They prepared to defend the area.
According to Charles Francis' inquest testimony (Herald,
6 July 1957), they collected a large quantity of guns and
The riot's sequence of events as reported in the newspapers remains confusing, some sources contradicting others. However, it is agreed that the riot lasted about three hours, and the following rough chronology took place: with the police gone, the fight continued on Bayard Street, ranging between Elizabeth and Mulberry. It is unclear exactly how many people participated directly in the riot. Seemingly a core group of approximately one hundred Sixth Warders fought against the Bowery Boys, while thousands watched from the streets and surrounding buildings, occasionally participating with thrown objects and epithets.

The "Dead Rabbits" pushed the Bowery Boys back to a partially-constructed house on the block between Elizabeth and Mott Streets, where a large brickpile was located. Here the Bowery Boys had a ready-made arsenal with which they succeeded in driving their foes to Mott and then to Mulberry Street. From these points the two sides lobbed objects at one another, with occasional forays into the block or so of disputed territory separating them.

Shortly after six o'clock, another squad of Metropolitans, again composed mainly of special policemen, was dispatched to Bayard Street to quell the fight. They attacked the "Dead Rabbit" side, swinging truncheons and

ammunition (much of it allegedly furnished by fearful storekeepers and businessmen of the neighborhood). The Bowery Boys also sent out scouting parties throughout the day, and in this way may have learned of the attack on the police in Bayard Street.
making arrests. The "Dead Rabbits" now were fighting on two fronts. From rooftops and windows, stones and bricks descended on the Metropolitans. The police seem to have remained only a short time, converging on several houses, making arrests, and departing with prisoners as best as they could. On their return to the White Street headquarters, the Deputy Superintendent decided his force was incapable of stopping the riot and ordered the police to remain at the station.¹⁸

It appears that guns were used earlier in the riot, but after the police left the use of firearms escalated.¹⁹

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¹⁸As clear-cut as the battle scene was often portrayed in the newspaper accounts and illustrations (see Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly, 18 July 1857), inquest testimony by policemen reveals why it remains so difficult to determine who took part and to differentiate participants from observers. For example, William A. Russell, a policeman from the 19th Precinct, stated, "When we reached the place there were a large number of people about, hooting and shouting, throwing missiles. The streets were crowded. Many women and children about . . ." (Inquest Testimony, 6 July 1857). The confusion of the scene, and the blending of onlookers and participants, was described vividly by Richard Henry Dana, Jr., who happened upon the riot. See Robert F. Lucid, ed., The Journal of Richard Henry Dana, Jr., Vol. II (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 825-826. I am indebted to Herbert Sloan of the Columbia University History department for bringing Dana's observations to my attention.

¹⁹One can only judge this by the lack of police observations of gunfire in inquest testimony. An interesting account of the riot by an outside observer can be found in a letter written by Lyman Abbott to his cousin. At the time the future Congregationalist leader and writer was studying law in the city. According to Abbott, who watched much of the latter part of the riot from a hotel room facing on Bayard Street, pistols were in use when he arrived at a little before seven. But, soon "muskets" were brought out and the number of wounded mounted rapidly (while the number
The Bowery Boys erected a barricade across Bayard Street
between Elizabeth and Mott, overturning carts and carriages.
They fired their guns from behind this shield, inflicting
heavy casualties on the "Dead Rabbit" side. The "Dead
Rabbits" had constructed a barricade at Mulberry Street,
composed mainly of crates and boxes, from which gunfire also
erupted. It appears that the Bowery Boys were more heavily
armed with more efficient weaponry, as well as better con-
cealment behind their barricade: there were no reported
Bowery Boy casualties while many were shot on the Mulberry
Street side, both participants and observers. This also may
have been partially due to the recklessness exhibited by the
"Dead Rabbits," supplying the press with many exciting
accounts of narrow escapes and spectacular injuries. How-
ever, the flavor of these stories is often heavily allegor-
ical--the "Goliath" Irishman vanquished by the "David"
Bowery Boy--so one must remain skeptical of many accounts of
deaths and injuries.  

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20 One New York Daily Times reporter felt that the
amount and intensity of gunfire should have led to many more
dead and wounded. However, he wrote, the rioters did not
fire "with deliberation," evidenced by the bullet marks
covering the surrounding houses (6 July 1857).
The end of the riot came, in some sense, through the exhaustion and distaste of the participants. But the needed catalyst appeared in the form of several Metropolitans who removed their badges and other identification and approached one of the sides. One of the policemen claimed to be a deputy-sheriff and carried on negotiations. The rioters on one side agreed to leave if their adversaries would do the same. The police promised the other side would comply and crossed over to the opposite barricades where they received the same response. By 8:30 most of the barricades had been disassembled and the area was "comparatively quiet."  

At least twelve people were killed or died shortly after from injuries received in the riot. Almost all the fatalities were the result of gunshot wounds. An undetermined number were injured—I have counted thirty-seven but the amount is undoubtedly higher—again mainly gunshot wounds.  

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21 At one point in the afternoon riot, probably between six and seven, Captain Isaiah Rynders, the leader of the Democratic Empire Club and one of the political leaders of the Sixth Ward, attempted to intervene. He was stoned from both sides and quickly retreated to White Street, where he suggested to Commissioner Draper that troops be deployed. Rynders' relationship to the gangs is discussed below in Part Two.  

22 See Appendix I for a list of the July 4th killed and wounded. There were other disturbances in the city on the afternoon of the Fourth. Riots took place in the Seventh and Thirteenth Wards, but neither was on the scale of the "Dead Rabbit"-Bowery Boy fight. The Seventh Ward riot occasioned the dispatching of reinforcements through Bayard Street which started the afternoon Sixth Ward riot. Other incidents took place, but on a smaller scale. In most
The Sunday Riot

Another riot occurred the following evening in a different part of the Sixth Ward. At about seven in the evening fighting started in the Five Points area, centering at the intersection of Worth (Anthony) and Centre Streets. The causes of and participants in this riot remained obscure. As contradictory as the newspaper coverage of the Saturday riot was, a general consensus about events and parties involved had been reached; there was a certain coherence to the rough chronology and general description of the event. The Sunday riot, however, received limited attention in the press. It was usually viewed as a negligible adjunct to the previous day's violence, a family quarrel within the Five Points area. The lack of detail about the second riot reflected the general lack of knowledge of the area, its people, social relations and organizations.

The Sunday riot was most often reported as a dispute between amorphous "Five-Pointers" and another gang. The Irish-American thought that the fight "took place between a number of Five Pointers and a gang of rowdies from some other locality." The Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer reported "a large gang of Centre st. ruffians, belonging to the 'Dead Rabbits,' resolved upon settling an old grudge against a party of Five-Pointers, called the 'Kerryonians,' and rushed into Worth Street like so many fiends." The of the situations, it was the appearance of the Metropolitan Police which touched off the rioting.
Times concurred to some extent, but considered the "Dead Rabbits" to be Five Pointers and the Kerryonians to be the Centre Street gang. The Tribune at times reported the riot as a dispute within the "Dead Rabbits," a fight between two factions, while at other times mentioned only the Kerryonians, noting that they had split into two warring parties. Sgt. Nathaniel T. Hicks' Sixth Precinct report stated the riot was the result of a quarrel between the "Dead Rabbits" and another gang "who generally congregate in Centre, Pearl and Elm streets." The two gangs had been united against the police on Saturday, he noted, but had had a falling-out subsequently. The Kerryonians, the Morning Express reported, were "denizens of Worth St., near Centre," but their antagonists had been the "Pelters," "those of Cow Bay and Little Water St." An "Eyewitness," in a letter to the Times, disputed Sunday newspaper coverage, saying that the participants had belonged to "the Kerry, or otherwise Cow-Bay party" and "the Centre-street crowd." The writer insisted that the "Dead Rabbits" had had nothing to do with Sunday's battle. Another "eyewitness" refused to attribute any organization to the riot, relating that

Some of the numerous vagabonds and thieves that infest that locality began quarreling among themselves. Blows were freely exchanged, and others, running to see what was the matter, became infected with the belligerent spirit till there were some hundreds beating and knocking about each other with clubs.\(^{23}\)

\(^{23}\)Irish-American, 14 July 1857; Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer, 6 July 1857; New York Daily Times, 6 July
There were also several versions of how the riot began. Some of the accounts related an undifferentiated free-for-all starting around five in the afternoon at Worth Street near Centre. The Tribune reported this as a squabble within the Kerryonians. This fight subsided and an apparently once-more united gang advanced on a "grocery" store located near Cow Bay (Little Water Street) and Worth Street.24

Most of the newspapers recorded the beginning of the riot from a dispute which erupted in the store at about seven. The fight seems to have originated from a disagreement over payment of the liquor bill. After the establishment's windows had been smashed and most of the fixtures destroyed, the "inmates" (usually referred to as "Five-Pointers") forced the "invaders" out of the store, pelting them with bottles all the way up the hill to Centre Street. Here the invading party was reinforced and was able to drive the grocery store group back. The "invaders" remained on the northeast corner of Worth and Centre Streets while the

1857; New York Daily Tribune, 6, 7 (Hicks' report) July 1857; New York Herald, 6 July 1857. See also the Irish News, 11 July 1857, which reported the riot as a dispute between two factions, and the New York Evening Post, 6 July 1857, which viewed it as an internal "Dead Rabbit" conflict. Alvin F. Harlow, Old Bowery Days: The Chronicles of a Famous Street (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1931), pp. 310-311, states it was a dispute between the Kerryonians of Worth Street and the Orangemen of Cow Bay and Water Street assisted by the Bowery Boys! His documentation is not indicated.

"Five-Pointers" congregated near the House of Industry. For some time fighting took place between the parties who lobbed bricks and rocks across the half-block separating them. Soon guns were brought out by both sides and the number of wounded mounted. Several people climbed onto the roofs of Nos. 74 and 76 Centre Street and quickly dismantled a chimney, throwing the bricks down upon the Five Points crowd below. By this time, thousands of spectators had gathered on the surrounding streets.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 6 July 1857; \textit{New York Herald}, 6 July 1857; \textit{New York Evening Post}, 6 July 1857; \textit{Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly}, 18 July 1857.}

At some point, a squad of ten policemen led by Sgt. Nathaniel Hicks arrived on the scene. However, the police had learned from the previous day's experience and, seeing the crowd of three to four thousand, Sgt. Hicks ordered his men back to White Street. Upon their return, Commissioner Draper called for the aid of the National Guard. Subsequently, rumors reached White Street that the rioters were planning a concerted attack on Metropolitan Police headquarters. Policemen were sent out and spread across White Street at Elm and across Broadway and Cortlandt Alley, awaiting the attack that never materialized.\footnote{\textit{New York Daily Tribune}, 6, 7 (Hicks' report) July 1857.}

The riot came to an end much in the same way it had the day before. Several people, including Rev. Louis M. Pease of the Five Points House of Industry, approached the
two sides and found them both willing to end the fight. The riot ended at about 8:30. Thirty to forty people had been injured, none were arrested.  

At nine o'clock that night the National Guard troops, who had been kept under arms most of the day, finally got under way. The Arsenal was prepared for a full-scale battle: the guardsmen were issued ammunition, a detachment of the Fourth Regiment Light Artillery with two field pieces remained on reserve, and a part of the building was set aside as an infirmary for wounded men. Several regiments marched to Metropolitan Police headquarters where they met a large body of police. The Metropolitans split into two groups of seventy-five men, one led by Commissioner Draper and the other by Deputy Superintendent Carpenter. They then moved out of White Street, the police walking ten abreast followed by several regiments of National Guardsmen, who marched with fixed bayonets.

This imposing force proceeded down Centre to Worth Street, stopping to clear the still crowded area. From there the troops and police moved to Pearl Street and then through the Five Points, where apparently one regiment was briefly stationed. The remaining force continued through Mulberry and Bayard Streets until it reached the Bowery.

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28 Ibid. At least one regiment, the Seventy-First, had remained under arms at the Arsenal all Saturday night.
"Halting at each corner," the Times reported, "squads of policemen were sent in each direction (while the military stood guard) to clear the streets, order all idlers home, and close the doors of all houses and stores." There were several incidents of resistance, particularly when liquor shops were ordered closed. Several people were arrested: one person for refusing to close his shop (he was later accused rather summarily of being a "Dead Rabbit"), and two men for throwing stones at the passing troops at the corner of Mulberry and Bayard Streets.\textsuperscript{29}

One peculiar incident took place as the troops approached the intersection of Bayard Street and the Bowery. Several men were observed dragging a wagon, which they abandoned upon seeing the advancing force. The wagon contained a six- or eight-pound "howitzer," loaded with grapeshot. Later that night, a Pat Matthews arrived at the White Street headquarters and informed General Hall that the Bowery Boys had learned of the "Dead Rabbits'" intention to use the gun against the troops. With the safety of the peace-keeping authorities in mind, the Bowery Boys had confiscated the weapon and were in the process of making off with it when the military had appeared. As the Herald noted, "It is unfortunate that no men were with the gun at the time of its falling into the hands of the authorities, to substantiate the version of the affair."\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{29}Ibid.; New York Evening Post, 6 July 1857.
\textsuperscript{30}See particularly, New York Herald, 6 July 1857.
By eleven the troops and police had succeeded in clearing the streets of the Sixth Ward, and the force returned to the Arsenal. The police appear to have played a marginal role in this general show of force. Brigadier-General Hall was really in charge of both the police and military, the Metropolitan officials being present to enhance the withered prestige of the police. The overt presence of such a compelling military force backing up the badly beaten Metropolitans left an indelible impression on the press which could not have been missed by the residents of the Sixth Ward: the police were unable to enforce the new laws without the overawing force behind them.31

Violence continued in the ensuing weeks. Individual incidents of assaults on Metropolitan policemen went on unabated. The quarantine station at Seguine's Point on Staten Island was attacked by a large crowd of immigrants who were concerned with rumored conditions there. They were finally held off by the Metropolitans' producing a cannon and two howitzers. The following weekend, a riot occurred in the Seventeenth Ward when German residents resisted the Metropolitans' efforts to clear the street after making an

31 New York Daily Times, 6 July 1857; New York Daily Tribune, 7 July 1857 (Hicks' report); Weinbaum, "Temperance, Politics, and the New York City Riots," pp. 256-257. A reported riot at Union Square sent one regiment racing up Broadway, where they found nothing and returned to the Arsenal. For comments about the atmosphere at White Street headquarters and the Arsenal, see Dana, Journal, pp. 825-826.
arrest related to the new liquor law. The focus of violence quickly centered on the death of an alleged innocent bystander and on the next day, July 13th, incidents of rioting and attacks on Metropolitans continued in the ward. The Metropolitans once again were forced to rely on the National Guard, and that evening marched through the Seventeenth Ward accompanied by three regiments of soldiers.  

The German and Irish riots were both responses to the new temperance law and the installation of the Metropolitan police who would enforce it. The law did more than close drinking establishments on the sabbath, already an infringement on immigrant cultures where liquor was an integral part of leisure activity; it limited the type of businesses which could dispense liquor (licenses for drinking-places were limited to inns, taverns or hotels, while "groceries" could sell liquor in quantities less than five gallons). Traditional neighborhood places of congregation--"shops, houses, outhouses, yards or gardens"--were no longer allowed to dispense liquor for drinking on their premises. Furthermore, and perhaps most outrageous of all, the law broke into internal family relationships, providing that on the complaint of a husband or wife (or child) a  

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32 "Report of Metropolitan Commissioners," Assembly, Documents (81st Session); Richardson, New York Police, p. 110; the most comprehensive description and analysis of the German riot is Weinbaum, "Temperance, Politics, and the New York City Riots," pp. 258-270, comparing it with the Irish riot; also see New York Daily Tribune, 14 July 1857, which blamed the German riot on the "Dead Rabbits."
spouse could be added to a published list of known drunkards to be distributed to all liquor dealers. Sale of liquor to such a listed person could lead to a loss of license and a twenty-five to fifty dollar fine for each offense, as well as other punishments. 33 The Irish News, for one, denounced this invasion of domestic affairs:

What a pretty condition of society! What a pleasant, conjugal hearth when the husband is denied an out-door glass of wine, a mint julep by the mere notification of the better and wiser half! How harmoniously too, the marriage bonds must jingle when the husband, by means of magisterial interference obtained by the wife, is a banned and branded man: a creature spurned from the threshold of every tavern keeper. Now we have no belief that home is to be made happy by an act of Parliament; acts of Parliament might as well regulate the sides of the bed to be occupied by man and wife; as well legislate for the particular leg, right or left, to be first ended with the morning stocking. This act of the New York legislature is, in effect, null and void from its absurdly meddlesome spirit. We will imagine a host of husbands, wives and others, duly notified by wives, husbands, and guardians to the licensed tavern keeper. Is it to be thought of that they will remain athirst—that they will not have many an illicit retreat opened to them, where they may smuggle themselves into drunkenness? No; temperance is no more to be forced by acts of Parliament than snow-drops are to be prematurely grown in a scorching oven. 34

Whether in the Irish saloon or German Volksgarten, the new liquor law was a disruption of a way of life. Both Irish


34 Irish News, 6 June 1857.
and Germans supported the Democratic party and Fernando Wood with varying degrees of exuberance because of their anti-temperance stance, in this case a stance—whether opportunist or not—in defense of an immigrant culture.

However, while both the German and Irish riots were in response to the temperance law, the motivations of the Irish were much more complicated. They were acting also as dedicated Democratic partisans, attacking the Metropolitans as political opponents before the police began to enforce the new law. The Germans, in contrast, rioted only after the police began to enforce the temperance law, and even then they were really responding to what they perceived as police brutality. As Paul Weinbaum has pointed out, the Germans viewed drinking as an important social activity outside the purview of legislation, while the Irish saw the Metropolitan and liquor laws as attacks on a social and political institution—the saloon—and thus as a challenge to their political power on a local level in New York City. In the predominantly Irish Sixth Ward, drinking was closely related to political activity, the saloon being the center of local political organization and the headquarters of many political gangs. The liquor law was thus an intrusion upon a local political structure. The Metropolitans were not only to enforce temperance, but had now been taken out of the control of the local political structure by the changed residency requirements. Policemen were less likely to be
malleable or lenient in their prosecution of laws and less likely to avert their eyes from election day offenses if they were no longer subject to pressures from their friends and neighbors. Finally, this threat to the growing power of Irish politicians came at an important transitional period when the Irish vote in the city was being truly felt for the first time (the newspapers noting Wood's victories partially as a result of it), and when the Irish were making inroads into the rationalizing Tammany machine. Therefore, the "Dead Rabbit"-Bowery Boy riot can be regarded on one level as a response to a perceived threat to recently acquired political power held by the Irish.35

The Sixth Ward was, to a great extent, a self-conscious ethnic and political entity. The ward's residents were isolated from the rest of the city physically by an inefficient and sporadic transportation system, and culturally and politically by their ethnicity and class, the industrial character of the ward, and the lack of

35 Weinbaum, "Temperance, Politics, and the New York City Riots," pp. 266-268; Rorabaugh, "Rising Democratic Spirits," passim; Charles Tilly, "Collective Violence in European Perspective," in Hugh David Graham and Ted Robert Gurr, eds., Violence in America: Historical and Comparative Essays (New York: Bantam Books, 1969), pp. 38-40 notes that violence often occurs when competitive social groups are gaining or losing influence in the political structure; see also, Michael Feldberg, "The Crowd in Philadelphia History: A Comparative Perspective," Labor History, 15 (Summer, 1974), pp. 333-334, noting the relationship of rioting to the "hard" returns of jobs and local political control. It should also be noted that the second largest ethnic group in the Sixth Ward was the Germans, which only would have contributed to a collective feeling of grievance against the liquor law.
administrative control in the area. A consciousness of some kind of solidarity may have existed, based on local voluntary institutions created as a means of self-identification and self-regulation in a situation of a weak central, normative metropolitan administration. Volunteer fire companies and gangs helped demarcate local territory and custom, reinforced ethnic and cultural hegemony in the area, regulated relationships between people within the ward as well as determined relationships with ethnic and political forces outside of the ward. With such a decentralized situation, rioting may often have been a method groups used for regulating these "foreign relations," as well as a means of maintaining cohesiveness in the face of outside opposition. Furthermore, outside perceptions of the Sixth Ward may have contributed to a unifying consciousness within the ward: a certain self-identification of community may have arisen out of the infamous reputation of the "bloody ould Sixth" and the Five Points, the home of the wild and criminal Irish. Richard Henry Dana, Jr., inspecting the ward on the morning of Sunday, July 5th, spoke to

one of the more respectable Irishmen, who looked as if he had no intention of laying a club over my head or putting a knife thro' me, [who] said that the New [York] police could not go into the 6th Ward,—that the men of the 6th Ward had vowed to kill them all, if they came there. I reminded him that the Police were backed by the whole state.

But, said he, "The Sixth Ward, Sir, is the strongest power on earth." He repeated this, & fully believed it. Nor is it strange he should. It has given the great Democratic Majority every year, & is the only hope the Dem. Party has of carrying the State, & [its inhabitants]
have enjoyed almost an impunity in their violence &
wickednesses.36

The population of the Sixth Ward demonstrated soli-
darity through its continual support of Wood, both in
elections and during the Metropolitan Police controversy.
Unlike most other wards, there appears to have been no
defections to the new police on the part of Municipal police
in the area during the months before the riot.37 Yet, if
one can perceive the Saturday riot as an instance of inter-
community conflict, the Sixth Ward residents and gangs
resisting the incursion of Metropolitan Police authority
(also represented by the Bowery Boys), the Sunday riot may
have been an instance of intra-community conflict. In other

36Seymour J. Mandelbaum, Boss Tweed’s New York (New
York: John Wiley & Sons, 1965), pp. 14-18 (The pervasive
lack of knowledge about life in the Sixth Ward displayed by
contradictory newspaper coverage of the riots bolsters
Mandelbaum’s isolation thesis); Michael Feldberg, "The
Philadelphia Riots of 1844: A Social History" (Ph.D. dis-
sertation, University of Rochester, 1970), Ch. 1, discusses
this conception of local regulatory institutions; Dana,
Journal, p. 825.

37City Clerk, "Complaints Against Policemen, 1856-
1857." The Metropolitans viewed the Sixth Ward with a
jaundiced eye after the riots, evidenced by the enforcement
of the liquor laws: the Sixth Ward had the highest rate of
arrests for 1858, mostly offenses involving intoxication or
disorderly conduct. This may simply mean that there were
more offenses committed in the Sixth Ward and the Metropol-
itans were just doing their job; however, it also indicates
that what Sixth Warders feared was, for a time, coming true
(Assembly, Documents, "Report of Metropolitan Commissioners"
(81st Session)). See also, Miller, "Legitimation of the
London and New York City Police," pp. 248, 283-284, which
notes the changing police policy to the carrying of guns
and use of summary punishment in the street in response to
increasing attacks on Metropolitans, having its greatest
effect in the immigrant wards.
words, the sense of cohesion Sixth Warders may have felt—especially in relation to outside political power—did not imply unity within the area. The Sunday riot appears to have been a battle between two gangs or factions within the ward, indicating that the role of such institutions as the gang in the internal relationships of the Sixth Ward must be further investigated to better understand the contradiction of unity and diversity these riots represented.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{38}See Gerald D. Suttles, *The Social Order of the Slum: Ethnicity and Territory in the Inner City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968) which, although dealing with the late twentieth-century central city ghetto, has insight into the self-defining role of local institutions like the gang in a local urban social and political structure. See also, Suttles, *The Social Construction of Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), which defines the slum community's relationship with outsiders further and uses the term, "defended neighborhood" to denote the "cognitive map" possessed by residents, defining an area whose boundaries are maintained by gangs.
PART TWO: The Gang and the Sixth Ward

"The Five Points--the St. Giles of New York--is the scene of more monstrous stories (at a distance) than any other spot in America; and yet it is not such an awful spot, after all . . ."

New York Daily Tribune
June 5, 1850
CHAPTER ONE

THE GANG AND THE CROWD

Although he visited the city for a short period of time, Charles Dickens quickly captured the contemporary New Yorker's image of the "bloody" Sixth Ward, particularly the infamous intersection of three streets, the Five Points:

This is the place: these narrow ways, diverging to the right and left, and reeking everywhere with dirt and filth. Such lives as are led here, bear the same fruits here as elsewhere. The coarse and bloated faces at the doors, have counterparts at home, and all the wide world over. Debauchery has made the very houses prematurely old. See how the rotten beams are tumbling down, and how the patched and broken windows seem to scowl dimly, like eyes that have been hurt in drunken frays. Many of those pigs live here. Do they ever wonder why their masters walk upright in lieu of going on all-fours? and why they talk instead of grunting? ¹

Dicken's lurid description of degeneracy and poverty was in tune with the perceptions of American chroniclers of ward life, particularly the reformers who settled in the area with the aim of converting the Irish Catholic inhabitants to a temperate and disciplined Protestantism. To these missionaries the Five Points was

a name which has hitherto been banished from the vocabulary of the refined and sensitive, or whispered with a blush, because of its painful and degrading associations.

¹ Charles Dickens, American Notes and Pictures from Italy (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 88-89. The streets were Cross, Worth (Anthony) and Baxter (Orange).
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 . . . .

It was, as a later writer described, "the home of desperadoes and depraved beings of every kind." ⁹

According to these reformers, some of the most desperate and degraded residents were represented in the membership of the Sixth Ward's many gangs. "They are far more brutal than the peasantry from whom they descend," wrote Charles Loring Brace,

and they are much banded together, in associations, such as 'Dead Rabbit,' 'Plug-ugly,' and various other target companies. They are our enfants perdu, grown up to young manhood. The murder of an unoffending old man . . . is nothing to them. They are ready for any offense or crime, however degraded or bloody . . . . ³

These and other evaluations of the working class Irish and the institution of the gang have been repeated by historians and popular writers up to the present time. The "Five Points" has remained in the popular mind as the metaphor for poverty, debauchery, and neglect. ⁴

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⁴For evaluations of the Irish gangs of the Sixth Ward written more recently, see Herbert Asbury, The Gangs of New York: An Informal History of the Underworld (New York:
But careful analysis of contemporary nineteenth-century sources leaves such an interpretation of Sixth Ward life open to question. These writers' general lack of knowledge about and hostility to the ward's residents prevented them from perceiving a complexity and dynamic underlying the hardship and poverty of Irish working class life in New York City. The work of historians Paul Weinbaum and Carol Groneman has questioned earlier conclusions made about Irish immigration and settlement in that part of the city. Through the use of manuscript census data which portrays a more complex image of the ward's inhabitants, Groneman has brought into doubt old and new analyses which perceived a "culture of poverty" pervading the area throughout the nineteenth century.  

This chapter will examine the gangs of the Sixth Ward through an analysis of contemporary sources. First, the riot crowd will be examined briefly to see what can be learned about the composition of the gangs, particularly the


"Dead Rabbits," noting the problems attached to such a study. The "Dead Rabbits" and the Bowery Boys will then be viewed through an analysis of the newspapers' riot coverage in an attempt to interpret the mid-nineteenth century popular perception of the gang, including gaps in knowledge and inconsistencies in content. From this "outside" view, the next chapter will attempt to delve inside the ward to discern the relationship of the gang to specific aspects of community life.

The Crowd

What can an analysis of the riot crowd tell us about the Sixth Ward population and, particularly, the role of the gangs in that area? There are many problems involved in such an examination. Confronted with a list of killed, wounded, arrested and indicted, one must pose several questions: Is this a representative sample of participants in the riot? Why were these people shot or arrested and not others? Who avoided bullets and police, and which wounded were never recorded? Is the list skewed in a certain direction due to some phenomenon we are unable to consider, for example a mass police arrest in one part of the crowd? Were any of the killed and wounded non-participants, shot down while observing the riot? Furthermore, just because an individual participated in the riot did not directly link him to the "Dead Rabbits" (none of the accused rioters were
ever alleged to be Bowery Boys). 6

The problem of distinguishing between killed or wounded onlookers and active participants constantly appears when analyzing the Saturday and Sunday riots. For example, one man who was accused of being an active participant in the Saturday riot—one newspaper labelled him the ring-leader—was a stranger to the area and very likely was drawn to the commotion simply out of curiosity. Much of the Inquest testimony was concerned with the deaths of observers (although some of this evidence, especially when the witness was a relative of the deceased, remains open to question). People wounded in other locations were included in the list of riot casualties by the newspapers, further clouding the crowd's portrait. Thomas C. Smith was stabbed early Saturday morning, yet his name appeared in the list of riot deaths. The most peculiar instance illustrating this

6 The New York Citizen, in an August 1, 1957 editorial criticizing the ineffectiveness of the Metropolitan Police, added:

"True, some of the late rioters have received pretty severe sentences; but only those who are poor and friendless—those who were least active, if active at all, in disturbing the public peace. The ringleaders were not brought to trial. In some instances they were arrested by the people—not by the police—but as soon as their importance became known they were immediately discharged by the authorities. There was, forsooth, no evidence against them—although the principal evidence against some of those who have been sentenced to six months' imprisonment and hard labor was, that they had unmistakably Irish names, and happened to be in the street, and perhaps wounded while the rioters were going on!" While one is left at a loss as to the details of who the "people" arrested, the general problem of analyzing the riot crowd is borne out.
problem of identifying rioters was the death of John Myers, who was reported as a victim of the Saturday riot. However, a week later the Herald related that Myers, who lived nowhere near the Sixth Ward, was none other than the notorious thief, "Jack Spratt"; he had been shot while committing a robbery on the night of July 2nd and, after a day in bed, had wandered out only to die from his wounds near the scene of the riot.⁷ People who were arrested in other parts of the Sixth Ward, as well as other areas of the city for different offenses were also included in the roll of rioters by the newspapers (see Appendices I and II).

The particular problem of determining who was an active rioter, who a "ringleader," and who a "Dead Rabbit" is illuminated in a general way by George Rudé, who (in the context of the pre-industrial 1789 Paris crowd) comments on the possibility of there being no overall leadership:

On such occasions, the police or militia were inclined to arrest and cross examine not so much leaders in any commonly accepted sense of the term as those who momentarily gave way to enthusiasm, showed more spirit, enterprise, or daring than their fellows, were heard to shout slogans, engaged in more spectacular acts of violence, or happened to be picked out and informed against by their neighbors.

In this case, Rudé emphasizes the temporary quality of this "leadership," limited to the occasion, dissolving any distinction between the "militant" and the "casual participant"

within the crowd.\textsuperscript{8}

With these caveats in mind and the understanding that at best this is a limited and highly unreliable sample, we examine the Saturday and Sunday riot crowds. The pre-dominance of Irish names (or Coroner's evidence of Irish birth) is most clearly seen, reflecting the majority of the ward's population. More striking is the large number of children and adolescents (under twenty-one) in the list of riot casualties. This is in marked contrast to the arrested who tended to be older (at least if a skill or trade can be taken as a measure of maturity). The preponderance of youthful deaths and injuries can probably be attributed to recklessness and over-exuberance, reflected in the newspaper coverage which reported daring behavior and resultant casualties on the part of boys and adolescents. Furthermore, children, less heedful of the danger of flying bricks and bullets, were more likely to flock to observe the riots, and there is much inquest testimony of casualties among such persons on the outskirts of the crowd. The older age of the men arrested could be a reflection of police observation of active participants. Since the Saturday arrests were mainly made during one or two sudden and short-lived sweeps while the "Dead Rabbit" side was preoccupied with fighting the

Bowery Boys, we must guess the reasons why a Metropolitan policeman would pick out a rioter for arrest, from culpability to convenience.

Perhaps most striking is the absence of women in the list of rioters, either wounded or arrested. The role of women in the riots remains particularly problematic due to this lack of documentation. No women were arrested or reported wounded, yet newspaper accounts mentioned their active participation. The Herald reported the observations of "two gentlemen" who watched the Saturday riot from the "piazza" of Moss' Hotel. They related a certain sexual and generational division of labor: "The firing of stones, brickbats, &c., from the Dead Rabbits was kept up with briskness, a number of women and children being busily engaged in gathering and breaking up stones, brickbats, &c., in their aprons and handkerchiefs, in the streets and carrying them to those on the housetops to fire down on the crowd." The Times reported that several policemen had converged on a house from which many stones had been thrown. Breaking down the door, they found a man and two women heaving paving stones onto the street below. The three people were arrested and ostensibly escorted to White Street headquarters, where no record remains of any woman being seized or named as a rioter.\(^9\)

\[^9\text{New York Herald, 6 July 1857; New York Daily Times, 6 July 1857.}\]
Women were reported as active in the Sunday riot also, yet again no woman was listed as wounded or later charged as a rioter. "The scene," as the Tribune melodramatically described it, "was horrible--men, women and even children participating with an almost fiendish glee in the horrible work of destruction. Windows were broken in, trees torn up and doors battered to pieces."\textsuperscript{10}

The occupations of some of the rioters belies the infamous reputation of the area. Unfortunately, the sample is quite small: out of nine-five listed rioters, both casualties and arrested, only twenty-four occupations were substantiated. The breakdown of occupations, by the descriptions either in the newspapers or Trow's Directory, were

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number of Rioters in Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bag sewer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brass founder</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bill poster</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carman</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cigarmaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clerk</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coachman</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gold beater</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>horse cart driver</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liquors</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paperfolder</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saloonkeeper</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tailor</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>works for circular saw maker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At least half of these occupations derive some artisanal status. But, more importantly, the idle and dangerous poor

\textsuperscript{10}New York Daily Tribune, 6 July 1857.
so feared and vilified at the time were not evidenced in the riot crowd, at least from the limited sample which can be gained. Whether this was also reflected in the gang's composition is difficult to determine, although we can surmise that some of the named rioters were "Dead Rabbits."11

The "Dead Rabbits" and the Bowery Boys

The newspapers described the two gangs in sensationalistic terms, but in distinctly different tones. The "Dead Rabbits" appeared to be an unknown entity, alien to the reporters' knowledge and sensibilities. The Bowery Boys, although never lauded, appeared in a more favorable light. This was partially due to that gang's role in the riot in support of the police. Yet, there was a constant reiteration of the Bowery Boys' better qualities and a presentation of past knowledge of their exploits which didn't occur in the case of the "Dead Rabbits." Certain information about these gangs can be gleaned from contemporary newspaper coverage, but attention must be paid to the contradictions and inconsistencies in the reporters' observations.

The "Dead Rabbits" was often described as a "Democratic faction" loyal to Fernando Wood, composed of "the

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11 See Appendices I and II for sources. Some occupations which were ascertained were not included in the sample because the person was almost definitely an onlooker (e.g., Henry Lautenberger) or controversy surrounds his participation in the riot (e.g., John T. Bernard). Cf., Weinbaum, "Temperance, Politics, and the Riots of 1857," p. 253, which lists only the occupations of arrested rioters, not including those indicted or listed as casualties.
offscourings of the city." Most of the ward's bad reputation could be traced to this organization which, according to the Tribune, was responsible for "9/10ths of the outrages" in the area. There was an official membership of one to two hundred men, ranging from eighteen to twenty-five years in age, although in times of combat the number was increased through alliances with other gangs. The "Dead Rabbits" had officers and purportedly held meetings which were announced through printed notices "embellished at one corner with the cut of a dead rabbit hanging by the heels." The gang's membership was reported to be predominantly Irish, mostly professional criminals, "rowdies," firemen, and "a small proportion of persons who have regular employment." 12

Some dispute existed over the area in which the "Dead Rabbits" concentrated their activity. Although some newspapers gave them full reign of the working-class Sixth Ward (the area east of Centre Street), the Herald limited them to the vicinity of Mulberry and Chatham Streets. 13 The gang's reported affiliation with certain volunteer fire companies, particularly Fulton Engine Company 21 located on Broadway and Worth (Anthony) Street, leaves the matter in

12 New York Daily Tribune, 6 July 1857; New York Daily Times, 7 July 1857. According to the Tribune, the leader of the "Dead Rabbits" was a typefounder named Dunn.

13 Ibid.; New York Herald, 7 July 1857; Supreme Court, New York County, Coroner's Inquisitions, Box 7914 in the New York City Municipal Archives, Testimony of Lewis Pike, 8 July 1857; "There is a gang who congregate in Mulberry st called the dead Rabbits (.)"
question. However, a good deal of inquest testimony noted that the "Mulberry Street Boys" was the gang's other name, implying some centrality to that area. The apparent lack of knowledge exhibited about the "Dead Rabbits'" focus of organization and the generalizations expressed about the gang's makeup indicate the newspapers' unfamiliarity with the Sixth Ward and its social life.

The interest which the newspapers expressed about the "Dead Rabbit" name could be another indication of their confusion about life in the Irish Sixth Ward. Every newspaper carried a story about how the name was allegedly gained, and the similarity of detail in each version—often word-for-word—points to one source for that information. The title "Dead Rabbit" was born out of a dispute within another gang called the Roach Guards (named after the owner of the bar which was its headquarters, located on Mulberry Street near Bayard). The cause of the division is unknown,

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14 New York Daily Times, 7 July 1857; New York Morning Express, 6 July 1857, which notes that Tom Walsh, foreman of Engine Company 21 located on the corner of Chambers and Centre Streets, was affiliated with the "Dead Rabbits." But, D. T. Valentine (compiler), Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York for 1857 (New York: Charles W. Baker, 1857) indicates that that is the location of Protector Engine No. 22, Engine Company 21 having its headquarters at Broadway and Anthony (Worth) Street. For references to the "Mulberry Street Boys," see for example Coroner's Inquisition, Testimony of Thomas Slowey, Charles Francis, Josiah McCord, 6 July 1857, and Lewis Pike, 8 July 1857.

15 This was also true for much of the above description of the "Dead Rabbits," particularly the information about the officers and printed notice, which was almost identical in language in the Times and Tribune.
but as the factions physically divided a dead rabbit was
thrown down in defiance by the loyal Roach Guards, one
supposes as a particularly degrading type of gauntlet. The
dissenters, however, picked up the carcass and made off with
it, proclaiming it as their new emblem. Thereafter, the
"Dead Rabbits" never failed to go into battle without its
emblem at the fore, pierced by a pike. Apparently, July 4th
was the exception which proved the rule.  

While the descriptions of the "Dead Rabbits" held a
sinister and exotic quality, the Bowery Boys were presented
in a more favorable light, one which denoted some familiar-
ity. The Tribune noted that, unlike the "Dead Rabbits," the
Bowery Boys "have the reputation of being honest men, and
the greater part of their number are mechanics or have some
regular employment." This more positive view may have
been the result of an intermingling of the description of
the generic type "Bowery B'boy" (the title used for the
habitués of that street and its theaters and saloons) with
the gang member, a tendency in both contemporary and later

16 New York Daily Times, 7, 8 July 1857; New York
Daily Tribune, 6 July 1857; New York Morning Express, 8 July
1857. The Times and Morning Express also carried a more
benign version involving the naming of a boy's cricket club,
its relationship to the gang remaining obscure. For later
versions of the first story, see Asbury, Gangs of New York,
pp. 22-23; Harlow, Old Bowery Days, p. 187; Charles H.
Haswell, Reminiscences of an Octogenarian of the City of
New York, 1816 to 1860 (New York: Harper & Bros., 1897),
p. 309.

descriptions which does not clarify the characteristics of
either party. However, the "Bhoy"-Boy confusion could be
evidence of a literal overlapping: The gang member may have
been one example of the generic type which in the popular
literature of the time was often presented as the quintes-
sentially primordial Jacksonian democrat, possessing the
best features of honesty, bravery, chivalry, forthrightness,
pride, and passion ("the free development to Anglo Saxon
nature," according to the Bowery chronicler G. G. Foster)
and the worst of bar room brawling, alcoholic dissipation,
and gambling (showing only "his outdoor, midnight, rowdy
aspect"). The overlap is also evident in the descriptions
of the "uniform" the "Bhoy" wore, including the high beaver
hat, and the boisterous and "rowdy" behavior contemporary
observers celebrated: the "Bowery Bhoy" was not a criminal
but a free-wheeling, fair-fighting artisan or apprentice
(often a butcher), and most popularly a volunteer fireman.\(^\text{18}\)

\(^{18}\)George G. Foster, New York by Gaslight: with Here
and There a Streak of Sunshine (New York: Dewitt & Davenport,
1850), pp. 101-106; G. G. Foster, New York in Slices; by an
Experienced Carver: being the Original Slices published in
the New York Tribune (New York: W. F. Burgess, 1849), p. 43;
Junius Henri Browne, The Great Metropolis; A Mirror of New
York (Hartford: American Publishing Co., 1869), pp. 67-75,
137, 562-563 (which sees the two types as interchangeable);
James D. McCabe, New York by Sunlight and Gaslight. A Work
Descriptive of the Great American Metropolis (Philadelphia:
Hubbard Bros., 1881), pp. 641-642; Haswell, Reminiscences of
an Octogenarian, pp. 270-271, 355, puts the "Bowery Bhoy" in
the 1830's. The intermingling of the two types runs through
the later literature: Asbury, Gangs of New York, pp. 30-37,
63; Harlow, Old Bowery Days, p. 188ff.; Lothrop Stoddard,
Master of Manhattan: The Life of Richard Croker (New York:
Longmans, Green & Co., 1931), p. 28. See the contrasting
The popular literature of the period, much of which was written for an audience who would never see or experience the Bowery—a sensationalistic and titillating literature which flourished in the 1860's through the 1880's, exposing the "seamier" side of city life—must be viewed carefully. The ideal and romantic "Bowery B hoy," heroic and crude, was an aspect of New York popular culture of the period, one viewed to some extent with an approving eye. Yet, that ideal image has to be taken into consideration when one ponders the less derisive coverage the Bowery Boy gang received in the press as compared to the "Dead Rabbits."

The Bowery Boy title itself covered many different gangs in the area adjacent to the Irish Sixth Ward: the Atlantic Guards, O'Connell Guards, and American Guards were either synonymous with, or offshoots of, the Bowery Boys. The exact political affiliations of the Bowery Boys were difficult to determine. The Tribune reported that, although a large part of the gang belonged to the Democratic Party, many were Republicans or members of the Native-American Party. Some members were affiliated with Hose Company 14 on Elizabeth Street between Walker and Bayard. However, all


were united in their dedication to nativism, proclaiming themselves as "Americans by birth," although many may have been Irish Protestants.20

Unlike the "Dead Rabbits," the Bowery Boys appeared in the news before the July 4th riot. During the 1856 City Council elections, riots took place in the Sixth Ward between Democratic factions. The contest was between Pat Matthews, a Customs House employee and keeper of a Bowery "porter house," and M. Gilmartin, a fruit dealer. On election day, Matthews and his Bowery Boys were driven from the Mott Street polls by Councilman Jim Kerrigan's Molly Maguire Boys. Matthews lost the election.21

The basis for the reported hostility between the two gangs was never clearly explained. The Metropolitan Police controversy was clearly the catalyst for open warfare between the two groups, in this situation the Bowery Boys having been placed in the peculiar position of surrogate police due to their reputed hostility to Fernando Wood and antipathy to his Irish Catholic supporters. But all the newspapers covering the 1857 riot reported a long history of

20 New York Daily Tribune, 6 July 1857; New York Morning Express, 6 July 1857, which called the two gangs Democratic factions; Asbury, Gangs of New York, p. 28; Harlow, Old Bowery Days, pp. 188-189, 296-297.

21 New York Daily Times, 5, 6 November 1856; New York Daily Tribune, 5 November 1856, which lists Matthews and the Bowery Boys as supporters of Fernando Wood which may mean that the gang switched allegiances, or more likely, in light of Wood's heavy Irish Catholic support, that the Tribune was simply mistaken; Morning Express, 6 July 1857.
conflict between the gangs. Yet this conflict had never before reached print, and the name "Dead Rabbits" seems to have been completely new to the reporters' knowledge. Again, the contradictions and vagueness of newspaper coverage indicates that little was known about the area or its inhabitants. One could further note that, despite the many references to Democratic factions, the inner workings of the Democratic Party—especially its "lower echelon" activities with a high degree of Irish and working class involvement—remained alien and inexplicable to contemporary observers.

Many newspapers based the gangs' hostility on a grudge originating from the last election and attempts by either party to take political control of the area. Fights between the two gangs were said to be prevalent and extremely violent. The Herald reported that attempts to instigate a riot had been "suppressed every Sunday for some six weeks past." "Every prominent man on either side," reported the Tribune, "is constantly on the qui vive in anticipation of an attack, and it may be concluded that the vicinity of Elizabeth street, which is the geographical limits of their respective jurisdictions, is not the most harmonious and quiet part of the Island." 22 Inquest testimony, however, often contradicted the newspapers' perceptions: most of the

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witnesses, some residents of the area and others Metropolitan policemen, claimed to be unaware of any hostilities between the two gangs.¹²³

Although several people were accused in the Coroner's Inquest of being members of the "Dead Rabbits," these proceedings were usually characterized by the silence of witnesses when asked to identify gang members. Even those wounded in the riot refused to discuss details of the disturbance with officials, as Coroner Perry found out after touring New York Hospital on Saturday night. He asked a Bowery Boy who had shot him and received the reply: "Now, coroner, if I was sure of dying the next moment I would not inform upon the person who shot me." The reporter who accompanied Perry noted the honor the Bowery Boy attached to his statement: "They looked upon the matter in the light of a free fight, and thought the authorities had no right to interfere with either of the factions while some long standing difficulties were being settled."²⁴

²³This behavior could be considered, on the part of residents in the area, as either a hostile response to outsiders asking questions or as fear of reprisals from neighbors or gang-members. Yet, Metropolitan police also reported no knowledge of hostilities and, most interesting, Lewis Pike, the one resident of the area who freely gave names of "Dead Rabbits" to the Coroner, knew of no hostility between the gangs. Coroner's Inquisitions, Testimony of Jacob McCord, 6 July 1857, and Lewis Pike, 8 July 1857.

²⁴New York Herald, 6 July 1857. A few days later, Perry was walking about the ward, attempting to locate witnesses and receiving no cooperation from the Irish inhabitants. "He thought," the Herald reported, "the the old
be given several different interpretations: the Bowery Boy's response and the silence of others could be evidence of general acceptance of such activity in the area as a means of settling disputes; or, the Sixth Ward residents' silence might demonstrate support for the "Dead Rabbits'" and rioters' activity in opposition to the Metropolitan Police. Finally, this general refusal to talk to authorities could be due to a fear of reprisals from gangs or disapproving neighbors.

Except for one instance, all direct accusations of "Dead Rabbit" membership were made by Metropolitan policemen. This may explain why no Bowery Boys were accused or later indicted as rioters, since they did not play an adversary role to authorities in the disturbance. The newspapers alleged that some of the dead rioters had been "Dead Rabbits," but often they did not agree on which of the killed were gang members. For example, the Irish News stated that Thomas C. Smith was "one of the outsiders, said to belong to the Dead Rabbits, residing at 51-Anthony-street, stabbed in a serious manner." It is unclear who said the deceased was a "Dead Rabbit," but it was revealing that Smith most likely was not killed in the riot but rather in a knife fight, and further that he was black. Thus, the Irish News' accusation, the only one made in its coverage of the riot, was concerned with placing blame outside of the Irish community, both

proverb 'There is honor among thieves' was admirably illustrated in this instance" (New York Herald, 10 July 1857).
geographically and racially. Other people were charged by
the press as being "Dead Rabbits" with little supporting
evidence beyond their deaths and inability to respond. From
the tone of such accusations and some of the replies, one
may surmise that such charges were taken very seriously,
with the fear of heavy legal reprisals attached to them.

In one instance there was a direct response to accu-
sations appearing in the press and inquest testimony. John
T. Bernard, a barber living on Division Street, was killed
in the riot and was reported by most of the newspapers as
being an active participant in the violence and a member of
the "Dead Rabbits." He was shot, it was reported, in the
act of hurling a brick, and lay in death with his fists
clenched as if to strike a blow. These charges were also
made by two witnesses in inquest testimony, one a Metropoli-
tan policeman and the other a reporter. His landlord and
employer expressed surprise at Bernard's involvement. A
letter appeared in the Herald on July 11th in which the
writer denounced the accusations and claimed to have been
with the deceased at the time he was reportedly throwing
bricks. The writer was aghast at the charges made against
his friend, noting that "it was on Mr. Bernard's way home
that led him through curiosity, the same as many other
innocent people, to go through Bayard street on the night he

25 Irish News, 11 July 1857; H. Wilson (compiler),
Trow's New York City Directory (New York: John F. Trow,
1856). See Appendix I, People Killed in July 4th Riot.
was shot." The correspondent signed his message, "Justice," apparently afraid to reveal his own name, which may be an indication of the intimidation involved in knowing anyone called a "Dead Rabbit" in areas outside of the Sixth Ward.  

The only witness who lived in the Irish Sixth Ward to identify "Dead Rabbits" and give detailed evidence about the riot was Lewis Pike of 96 Centre Street, who was listed in the newspapers under the subtle sobriquet, "John C. Smith (a boy about 18)." Pike, aside from naming several rioters, pointed out the "ringleaders" of the gang. A sixteen-year-old who had been arrested on July 5th, James Quay, claimed boastfully before the Court of Special Sessions of being "a Dead Rabbit boy." Apparently he was unsuccessful in convincing the judge of his malfeasance and was released for lack of evidence showing actual participation in the Sunday riot.

26 Coroner's Inquisitions, Testimony of Israel Bower (Metropolitan Policeman), 7 July 1857; J. C. Cohen (reporter), 8 July 1857; New York Daily Times, 6, 8 July 1857; New York Herald, 8, 11 July 1857; Trow's Directory (New York: John F. Trow, 1856, 1857). Curiously, another barber, Henry Lautenberger, who had a shop near Bernard's was killed in the riot. One may conjecture that they knew each other and may both have been onlookers killed in the fray. See Appendix I.

27 Coroner's Inquisitions, Testimony of Lewis Pike, 8 July 1857; New York Daily Tribune, 9 July 1857; New York Herald, 9 July 1857. The purported ringleaders were Jack (Jacob) Dunn, William ("Patty") Welch (Walsh) who was killed in the riot, and "Curlew." Beyond their names, no other information was given and there is no evidence of indictments. Several other witnesses named people they had seen in the riot, but none mentioned "Dead Rabbits" by name.

28 New York Daily Times, 10 July 1857. The final indictment made by the Coroner, listing those charged with rioting, stated they were all members of "the Mulberry St or Points section," Coroner's Inquisitions, 9 July 1857. See Appendix II, Arrested and Indicted Rioters.
While there was very little public identification of "Dead Rabbits" (whether that was due to fear or approval, or both, cannot be definitely ascertained), several people came to the gang's defense. A letter written by a bootmaker living in the ward appeared in several newspapers in slightly different versions which vehemently disagreed with the savage "Dead Rabbit" image presented in the press:

July 7, 1857

Several of the city's journals have called "The Dead Rabbit Club," or "The Roach Guard," a gang of thieves, pickpockets, Five Pointers, &c. Now, I hereby offer a reward of $25 to any one who will prove that a single member of that guard (by the way, there is no such club as the Dead Rabbits) is a Five Pointer, or thief, or a pickpocket. I am willing to submit the question to the decision of any Police Justice of this city. I also hold myself ready to deposit $25 in your hands (pardon my assurance) at any moment you may call for it, in the event of this offer being accepted.

MARCUS HORBAL, 25 Mulberry street

PS -- Allow me to say of the young men composing that guard that they are, one and all, honest, industrious and hardworking men, most of whom possess a trade, which they follow for a living.29

After testifying at the Coroner's Inquest that the "'dead rabbits' or mulberry st. gang are composed of thieves," Josiah McCord, a Metropolitan policeman, requested permission to recant his testimony. He related to the Coroner that he had learned from reliable sources that "they were all hard

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29 New York Herald, 8 July 1857; New York Daily Times, 8 July 1857; New York Daily Tribune, 8 July 1857; Trow's Directory (New York, 1856, 1857), which lists the writer as Martin Horbelt, the discrepancy possibly due to a partially indecipherable signature.
working, honest men." The Coroner refused to change McCord's testimony, noting that any "desperate character" in the city could dredge up someone to claim him respectable. Although one cannot ignore the possibility of some form of political pressure being placed on the witness--his main "reliable source" was a judge--his uncertainty points to a lack of knowledge about the "Dead Rabbits" in general.\(^{30}\)

There was a discrepancy between perceptions of some people living in the ward and outside observers either reporting in the newspapers or testifying in the Coroner's Inquest. Specific charges made against residents in the area, and particularly against the "Dead Rabbits," were challenged, and the refusal of residents to speak to representatives of civil authority can be seen, to some extent, as a measure of solidarity. This can be compared with the absence of complaints filed by Bowery Boys or their friends, indicating their tacit approval of the newspapers' version of that gang's part in the riot. The dichotomy of outside-inside observations may also indicate very different class and cultural attitudes to violence: the residents of the ward may have viewed certain behavior as legitimate and within an acceptable cultural context; in effect, they accepted a different set of "rules of violence" than

observers unacquainted with that context (note the wounded Bowery Boy's quip to Coroner Perry). 31

There is an indication that the "Dead Rabbits" did not exist in quite the way the newspapers presented it; that is, in regard to the name itself. Throughout inquest testimony witnesses said the name "Mulberry Street Boys" before using the title "Dead Rabbits," if the latter name was pronounced at all. The final inquest indictment, although accusing rioters of belonging to "the Mulberry St or Points section," did not mention the "Dead Rabbits." Marcus Horbalt in his letter claimed knowledge of a "guard," but not with that name. The Herald printed a letter from another Sixth Ward resident, Harry H. Molony, who stated that the reporter's "information as regards the character of many located there [the Sixth Ward], is as accurate as his genius is imaginative in giving existence to a club, which he calls the 'Dead Rabbits,' which does not nor never did


"Genuinely violent societies are always and acutely aware of these 'rules,' just because private violence is essential to their everyday functioning, though we may not be so aware of them, because the normal amount of bloodshed in such societies may seem to us to be so intolerably high." (210-211)

Although this statement illustrates a much more extreme situation, it is useful in revealing the problem of the dichotomy between the cultural perceptions of the "outsiders" and Irish "insiders." This will be discussed below more comprehensively, particularly in regard to Irish cultural continuities and pre-industrial traditions.
belong to the Sixth Ward, to the personal knowledge of one resident in it for twelve years, and who remains."32

Although in the end one can only conjecture, the sudden appearance and emphasis on the name "Dead Rabbits" may have been a conscious or unconscious attempt on the part of the newspapers to portray the Sixth Ward gang as savage, criminal, and alien. The title "Dead Rabbits" certainly contrasts sharply with the more light-hearted (and celebrated) Bowery Boys. Furthermore, in the popular jargon of the time, according to Herbert Asbury, "a rabbit was a rowdy, and a dead rabbit was a very rowdy, athletic fellow." The name was thus literally value-laden. This is not to say the name was invented by the newspapers, a grossly conspiratorial view at best. But the emphasis placed on that sobriquet, one that may have been secondary or perhaps generic in the Sixth Ward, would tend to bolster preconceptions about the "bloody ould Sixth" and its poor Irish inhabitants.33

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32 See, for example, Coroner's Inquisitions, Testimony of Thomas Slowey, Charles Francis, Josiah McCord, 6 July 1857, Lewis Pike, 8 July 1857, Indictment, 9 July 1857; New York Herald, 8, 10 July 1857. Richard Henry Dana, Jr. reported that, coming upon the Saturday riot, he asked "a quiet looking man . . . what was going on. 'Oh, a bloody fight, Sir. It has been going on two hours.' 'Who are fighting--whom is it between?' 'Between our chaps & the Bowery Boys.' The Journal of Richard Henry Dana, Jr., Robert P. Lucid, ed. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 823.

33 Asbury, Gangs of New York, p. 22. One should also consider that such a malevolent title would tend to make the
Interestingly, for days after the riot the "Dead Rabbits" suddenly became highly conspicuous, parading in many different shapes and forms. At the funeral of one of the riot's casualties, Patrick Rowhan, it was reported that members of the gang attended wearing "silk badge[s] bearing the words 'Dead Rabbit Club.'" After attending a different funeral in Brooklyn, a large group of "Dead Rabbits" was reported to have dined at a Greenpoint hotel without having paid the bill. This group was dressed less uniformly, with no identification badges. On the Monday after the riot, bands of young men were reported by the Herald parading about the Sixth Ward proclaiming their "Dead Rabbit" status. And on July 9th, a meeting in support of Mayor Fernando Wood was held in the Nineteenth Ward which was labelled by the Tribune as a "Dead Rabbit Demonstration," sponsored by affiliates of the gang in that ward. In an editorial on July 14th, the Tribune further proclaimed that the "Dead Rabbits" was at the heart of the German riots which had taken place the weekend of the 11th, not to mention all the disturbances in Manhattan.\(^3\) The sudden overt and prevalent

Metropolitans' adversaries that much more inhuman and insurmountable, putting their sorry efforts in a more favorable light.

presence of "Dead Rabbits" can probably be attributed to the press coverage of the riot; undoubtedly, after such a notorious battle many young men in the city were prepared to announce themselves as tough street-fighters. Furthermore, there was a willingness on the part of the anti-Wood newspapers, particularly the Tribune, to view any disturbance after the July 4th riot as incited by "Fernando Wood's 'Dead Rabbits,'" whether it was a group of boys running out on a restaurant bill or political partisans in a distant part of the island announcing support for the Mayor's policies.

The sudden appearance of the sobriquet "Dead Rabbits" in July of 1857 did not prevent the title from becoming synonymous with criminal gangs from that time forward. One need only scan the garish guides to New York City written in the 1860's, 1870's, and 1880's to find the "Dead Rabbits" listed as a particularly loathsome "Five Points" gang. This image would continue through the writings of reformers like Charles Loring Brace, where the gang's members were thought to be predominantly children. The name also found its way into popular literature. The picturesque and primitive trio of criminals named Thiglin, Loon and Runnion in George L. Aiken's melodramatic novelette, Cynthia. The Pearl of the Points, was collectively termed "Dead Rabbits," a name the writer may have assumed to be familiar to his readers.35

35 Brace, The Dangerous Classes of New York, p. 27; George L. Aiken, "Cynthia. The Pearl of the Points. A Tale of New York," The Novelette, 91 (1867?). Aiken is best
After analyzing the newspapers' coverage of the gangs and the riots, it becomes clear that most reporters and official observers knew little about the social, political or cultural life in the Irish Sixth Ward. The inconsistencies and confusion characterizing the reporting of gang activity--particularly in regard to the "Dead Rabbits"--point to an inability on the part of contemporary writers to understand or decipher the purposes of these organizations or their relationship to ward life. A dichotomy existed between the perceptions of "outsiders," who viewed the Sixth Ward Irish as alien and demoralized, and ward residents who challenged the views of these chroniclers (sometimes through their refusal to cooperate in testimony or action). These newspaper accounts (as well as the observations of many reformers of the period, which will be discussed below) denied the inhabitants of the Irish working-class ward any motivations, organization or identity beyond a pointless, criminally-inspired and self-destructive violence. These views reinforced contemporary stereotypes of the poor Irishman and strengthened middle- and upper-class fears about a

known for his extremely popular dramatization of Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. See also, more recently, Ishmael Reed, Mumbo Jumbo (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1972), p. 20:

"New York is accustomed to gang warfare. White gangs: the Plug Uglies, the Blood Tubs of Baltimore, the Schuykill Rangers from Philadelphia, the Dead Rabbits from the Bowery, the Roaches Guard and the Cow Bay Gangs terrorize the city, loot, raid and regularly fight the bulls to a standoff."
degraded and dangerous class, fears which partially prompted the Metropolitan Police and Liquor Excise laws.

It is therefore important to attempt to go beyond outside interpretations of Sixth Ward life. The gang should be defined within this setting, not as a static or simply pathological social form, but as a changing institution affected by the social and cultural processes at work in a mid-nineteenth century immigrant ward. The gang must be considered in the light of its political base, the impact of American society upon Irish peasant culture, and the effects of industrialization upon the predominantly Irish working-class area.
CHAPTER TWO

THE GANG AND WARD LIFE

This chapter will investigate the nature of the Irish gang, particularly in regard to its setting in the Sixth Ward of New York City. There are many problems related to investigating the mid-nineteenth century urban gang; the term itself is value-laden, usually connoting the definition, "Any band or company of persons who go about together or act in concert (chiefly in a bad or depreciatory sense, and in mod. usage mainly associated with criminal societies)." This meaning of the term was used by contemporary observers, although it was more prevalent among Progressive Era reformers, who were hostile to the institution and perceived deviant or pathological traits in its activities. The term still holds that particular criminal connotation, as any newspaper coverage of juvenile collective violence today will attest to.¹

The gang has been understood by many historians as not only criminal in nature, but within the context of present-day youth gangs. A direct continuity over time has been assumed between the Irish gangs of ante-bellum New York, the Italian and Jewish gangs Jacob Riis so vividly described, and the Hispanic street gangs of the South Bronx and Chinese youth gangs of today. For example, Robert Riegel wrote of the gangs in 1840's New York:

The streets were made particularly dangerous by the roving gangs of toughs who were practically uninfluenced by the police. Five Points had such pleasant little groups as the Forty Thieves, Shirt Tails, and Plug Uglies; the last, who wore plug hats filled with wool and leather, which they pulled over their ears as a sort of helmet, were noted for their brutality. The East River area had such gangs as the Buckaroos, Hookers, Daybreak Boys, and Swamp Angels, while the Chrystie, Forsyth, and Elizabeth street region had the notorious Slaughter House gang. Local bullies lined up their gangs in bloody group warfare. Bricks and stones furnished long-distance weapons. Upon closer contact, clubs and bottles and brass knuckles were brought into play, as well as ingenious variations of biting, eye-gouging, kicking, and stamping. From time to time the rowdies showed their high spirits by beating up innocent bystanders or by utterly meaningless riots during which they threw lime and flour, broke windows, tipped over wagons, demolished fences, and manhandled watchmen.

The gangs were only evidence of the crowding and filth of the city. A lack of education and of parks, together with improper housing, pushed boys and girls into the streets at an early age. The boys often became gangsters, beggars, thieves, chimney sweeps, or pimps. The girls became beggars, flower girls, or prostitutes. Apparently the average girl had her first illicit sex experience at the age of eleven or twelve, and the path to prostitution was simple, if not always rosy.²

Riegel's description placed the gang outside of time. Except for specific names and geographical locations, the comments could have described present-day life in the poor sections of any American city, with all the stereotypes which are often attributed to life in slum neighborhoods. The mid-nineteenth century gang is not presented as a lower-class institutional adaptation to certain specific cultural, social or economic circumstances of the time, but a pervasive and static lower-class way of life. This has led to the mistaken impression of many historians that the youth gang was a distinct element in ante-bellum New York life, an Irish version of the adolescent gangs of today. This is partially due to the observations of such influential Progressive reformers as Jacob Riis and Robert Hunter, whose incisive descriptions of what they termed juvenile delinquency and references to the gang and its deviant traits greatly influenced latter-day understanding of the institution and stamped their evaluations on an earlier period. However, as I will discuss below, it appears that the mid-nineteenth century Irish gang was not age-segregated, but rather integrated, including both adults and children, giving it an important distinction to gangs at the turn of the century and today. Furthermore, the change to age-segregation, and the apparent rise of the youth gang, a peer group, after the Civil War can be traced to specific conditions which were related to the development of the city and the transformation of the Irish immigrant. The gang is not
a constant urban presence, but an evolving and complicated institution.³

The gang has usually been viewed as a fairly simple form of lower-class social organization. To a great extent, this is due to the usual source historians have consulted in studying the gang, Herbert Asbury's *The Gangs of New York*. Asbury's book is a fascinating compendium of facts and fancy about lower-class life in New York City in the nineteenth century. His presentation of the gang makes exceptionally entertaining reading, and he carefully (if not always accurately) culled the contemporary newspapers and popular literature of the period. But the overall result is a one-dimensional and sensationalistic view of the gang as an urban plague, the foe of police and decent citizenry, the locus of all the worst traits of man reduced to his most primal and predatory state. Although more recent historical work has attempted to view the gang less one-dimensionally, it remains a fairly simple organization, at its most advanced state having some political purpose, specifically as a center for the recruitment of "shoulder-hitters" and other election

day "bully-boys." Furthermore, the internal composition of the gang remains a mystery: was it an informal or official organization, were there officers, rules, initiations?  

This chapter will look beyond the generic conception of the gang which belies its complexity. Gangs performed various functions within the Sixth Ward, some of them exclusive of one another and others overlapping in their purposes, all changing as the city, the ward and the ward's inhabitants changed. For reasons of analysis, I have divided the investigation of the gang and Sixth Ward life into four sections. "The Gang and Politics" looks at the political role of the gang in the ward, and at some of the better-known political gangs and their relationship to other ward institutions. "The Gang and Ireland" investigates the Irish immigrant's life in the Sixth Ward and Ireland as compared to what it was often believed to be, to find the sources of tension and violence in the immigration experience which contributed to the formation of the gang. "The Gang and Industrialization" analyzes the gang's relationship to the changing conditions of work and life within the Sixth Ward. "The Evolution of the Gang" briefly observes the transformation of the gang.

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after the Civil War. Although this procedure may break up the gang's components into seemingly mutually-exclusive parts, it should be realized that the characteristics discussed in each section often overlapped and intermingled, making the gang a more complicated institution than historians usually assume.\

The Gang and Politics

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Tammany Hall had changed from the virulently nativistic institution it had proclaimed itself as being in 1789. That year the society adopted a constitution which stated, "No person shall be eligible to the office of sachem (one of the board of thirteen governors), unless a native of this Country." The society's activities for the first two decades of the nineteenth century were characterized by conflicts between native-American officers attempting to preserve their control and Irish Catholics vying for power. But with increased immigration and the passage of universal manhood suffrage in the state in 1822 Tammany came to realize the value of the new voter. The sheer numbers of Irish and other ethnic groups made the acceptance of immigrants only sensible, and by the 1830's and 1840's the Whig and Native-American

5Johnson, "The Search for an Urban Discipline," p. 86, breaks the gang into four different types: street corner, theft, violent, and combat. However, this typology is not adequate because it deals only with overt behavior as perceived by newspapers and does not attempt to see the function of the gang, nor its relationship to its environment.
Parties' hostility made Tammany the only alternative open to them for political participation. 6

Irish Catholic immigrants found the Tammany "machine" responsive to their needs and ready to perform services. A symbiotic relationship developed in which immigrants were aided by such Tammany activities as an efficient and extra-legal naturalization process, while the Democrats in turn built a solid base of electoral power and support. Irishmen were able to rise in the party structure, finding a certain means of social mobility within the marginal institution of the "machine." 7

6 M. R. Werner, Tammany Hall (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1928), pp. 26-29 (immigrants could be admitted under the honorary posts of warriors and hunters); Gustavus Myers, The History of Tammany Hall (New York: published by author, 52 William St., 1901), p. 128. The ostensibly apolitical Tammany Society's thirteen sachems, or board of governors, controlled the overtly political Hall's General Committee. This Committee made policy and oversaw activities from fundraising and the writing of party resolutions to political rallies and primary elections. The General Committee was annually elected by party members in the wards, but the elections were usually manipulated by the Society. Leonard Chalmers has pointed out that the General Committee provided a democratic facade which gave the Tammany Society room in which to maneuver (Leonard Chalmers, "Fernando Wood and Tammany Hall: The First Phase," New York Historical Society Quarterly, LII [October, 1968], p. 390).

In the 1850's the Democratic Party was reshaped and transformed by its Irish officers and constituency (34 percent of the city's voters in 1855 were Irish), especially on the lower levels of the party. The rise of the "ward heeler" and his saloon as the center of local political activity was usually attributed to Irish influence, as was the intermingling of politics and other popular pastimes such as fire fighting and boxing (although nativist working class participation in these activities leaves this ethnic interpretation in dispute). This "rowdy" element of the Democratic Party, with its heavy use of violent means to gain political ends, was deplored by the city's middle and upper classes of all parties. Visiting the city, the British politician Richard Cobden, no friend of the Irish, sympathized with the many New Yorkers who were disturbed by the seemingly peculiar and vicious political behavior in the immigrant wards, stating, "It is only in places like New York, with its vast foreign sediment and froth (German and Irish) where some Americans complain of the evil of universal suffrage."  

powerful machine politicians as William Marcy Tweed and Richard Croker rose out of the political gang structure to party dominance, although both men were Irish Protestants attesting to continuing prejudice against real Irish Catholic political power. Croker belonged to the Fourth Avenue Tunnel Gang (Lothrop Stoddard, Master of Manhattan: The Life of Richard Croker [New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1931], p. 30). A more recent "boss" reputedly rose to power out of a political gang, Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago (see Mike Royko, Boss: Richard S. Daley of Chicago [New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1971], pp. 30-32).

The first politician to effectively utilize the well-organized Irish Democratic constituency on a city-wide level was Fernando Wood. As we saw in Part One, the Irish supported Wood from the 1854 election—a campaign steeped in the nativist-immigrant issue—through his defeat in December, 1857 (and on to later successful campaigns). They were the one group he could always count on for support throughout his checkered and sporadic career as mayor.  

During and after Wood's tenure as mayor, it was claimed that much of Wood's political strength was the result of the maraudings of gangs on election day. The mayoral elections of 1854 and 1856 were characterized by rioting and intimidation at polls in the lower wards, followed by accusations of fraud. It was said that in the Sixth Ward, four hundred more votes were cast than the entire voting population of the area. The "Dead Rabbits" were reported to be Wood's supporters, and certainly the gang's hostility to the Metropolitan and Liquor Excise laws was partially a reflection of support for the Mayor. But the direct relationship between Wood and the gang was never indicated, and the purported lines of command leading from City Hall to the Sixth Ward were never documented.  

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10 On the 1856 election, see Chalmers, "Fernando Wood and Tammany Hall," pp. 398-400; Alfred Connable and Edward
Raucous activity in such areas as the predominantly Irish Sixth Ward could have been the result of popular sentiment rather than simple manipulation from above, although when violence occurred it was exploited and no doubt looked upon with an approving eye.

The relationship between the gang and politics—and the relationship between violence and politics in antebellum New York—was best elucidated in the career of Mike Walsh. Walsh, a radical Democrat, challenged Tammany's control of local political organization in the Sixth Ward during the 1840's. He declared himself the representative of the "subterranean" members of the party, although he was more the leader of an important dissident faction than anti-Tammany. He edited several short-lived but outspoken newspapers, was sued many times for libel, and served one term in the House of Representatives. According to Robert Ernst, the Irish-born Walsh organized "perhaps the first political gang in America," the "Spartan Band." Many historians of Tammany date the rise of the political gang from Walsh's

Silberfarb, Tigers of Tammany: Nine Men Who Ran New York (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), p. 122. In regard to Wood and the gangs, see the charges made in Matthew Hale Smith, Sunshine and Shadow in New York (Hartford: J. B. Burr & Co., 1869), pp. 268-271, which notes his supposed intermingling with these gangs in the 1840 congressional campaign. He had "intermingled" with laborers and longshoremen, if these were gang members (Chalmers, p. 394). Charles H. Haswell, Reminiscences of an Octogenarian of the City of New York 1816 to 1860 (New York: Harper & Bros., 1897), p. 309, notes that the "Dead Rabbits" in one case sent "a Representative to Congress." The person is unnamed, but could he have been implying Wood?
attempts at gaining political ascendancy in the area. The Spartan Band or Association was said to number four hundred, composed of young Irish working men (Walsh himself had been a lithographer among other trades), although the makeup of the gang was never clearly determined, Tammany-observer Matthew Breen calling it, "highly miscellaneous and erratic." The New York Evening Post reported the Spartans as "Walsh and his Custom House boys." In the 1840's the Band quickly became renowned for disrupting political rallies in the Sixth Ward, the physical removal of their adversaries being the means to their goal. Purportedly, this new "method" was so effective that soon it became standard procedure and the political gang had been born.11

The Spartan Band's violent tactics also were utilized on election days. These supposedly unique qualities seem to have been shared by other Democratic gangs or factions in the area. The municipal election of 1842 was characterized by fierce fighting in the Sixth Ward between what newspapers reported as the Spartan Band and the "Fagh-

a-Ballaghs." Unfortunately, as in other disturbances in the Sixth Ward, the details of the fighting were contradictory and confusing, some newspapers reporting anti-Catholic bias on the part of the Spartan Band, others insisting on only political differences causing the conflict. One thing, however, was clear: the Spartan Band was not alone in its use of collective violence in the political process.¹²

Whether contemporaneous or imitative, the Spartan Band soon had a rival in the Sixth Ward. In 1844, Isaiah Rynders formed the Empire Club, centered at a saloon called the Arena at 28 Park Row. Rynders led a sporadic career in Tammany politics, at times possessing a great deal of political control in the area through his band of immigrant runners; at other times, in the late 1840's, he left Tammany and sided with the Native-American Party, losing much of his power in the ward. This political apostasy was purportedly the result of a battle in Dooley's Long Room, a saloon in a hotel on Duane and Cross Streets. There Rynders' men were soundly beaten by another gang run by "Con Donoho," a ward heeler who owned a "grocery store" on Baxter and Chatham Streets. Rynders and Walsh were bitter enemies, the leader of the Spartan Band considering his opponent to be unprincipled and the head of "a gang of hireling ruffians."¹³


¹³Rogers, "Mike Walsh," pp. 49-50; Asbury, Gangs of New York, pp. 43-44; Werner, Tammany Hall, p. 64; Harlow, Old Bowery Days, pp. 299-303, 331-332. For Rynders' active
As we saw in the last chapter, the obstacles to determining the exact nature of the Sixth Ward gangs are numerous. Clearly, the emphasis was on the use of so-called "bully-boy" tactics, the employment of "roughs" and "shoulder-hitters" to take physical control of voting places and meetings, each faction turning out its army during campaigns or on election day. The violence was not simply gratuitous; the soft treatment sometimes received in court by various "roughs" arrested at disturbances denoted an understanding between judges and a Democratic political structure they owed allegiance to, although the frequency of such acts of leniency is open to question. But, the so-called "roughs," the young men who belonged to the gangs of the area, must not be taken out of context and placed in the category of professional criminal. Often these men were reported to be laborers, apprentices, or young artisans, and thus the relationship of work, leisure and political activity must be further analyzed. The extremity and content of the violence will be discussed below, but the problem of its "criminality" or pathology--particularly in regard to life in an immigrant, working-class ward and its relationship to the larger city--was always difficult to determine.  


14 For the description of "roughs," see Junius Henri Browne, The Great Metropolis; a Mirror of New York (Hartford: American Publishing Co., 1869), p. 72; Wilbur R. Miller, Jr.,
The focal point of ward politics was in the saloon, out of which most gangs operated. Walsh's Spartan Band was said to congregate at the saloon of Dunn's Sixth Ward Hotel; Ryders' Empire Club was located at the Arena; the headquarters of the "Dead Rabbits" and Bowery Boys were said to be located in saloons. In the 1820's, Rosanna Peer's (or Peter's) "grocery store" (grog shop) on Centre Street south of Anthony was said to be the headquarters of one of the first well-organized gangs in the area, the Forty Thieves. Throughout his diary covering the years 1850 to 1851, police detective William Bell constantly made note of specific gangs frequenting certain saloons. By 1864 there was one saloon for every six people in the Sixth Ward where "could be found," according to Gustavus Myers, "a crowd of loafers and bruisers who could always be relied upon to pack a primary or insure or defeat the election of certain nominees." Personnel were always available to add to the numbers of the

"The Legitimation of the London and New York City Police, 1830-1870" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1973), pp. 278-280. Their non-criminal nature is discussed in Asbury, Gangs of New York, p. 63; Harlow, Old Bowery Days, p. 195 (although the "Dead Rabbits" are, again, treated differently). An example of a judicial understanding in regard to political violence is supplied by the Rev. Louis M. Pease of the Five Points House of Industry in its Monthly Record, 1 (January, 1958), pp. 228-229. A much more extreme—and one wonders how frequent—example of gang violence is one involving an infamous double murder in 1859 committed by members of the Duane Street gang. The gang's apparent political connections led to a labyrinthine and ultimately unsuccessful attempt at prosecution (Cook, The Armies of the Streets, pp. 36-37). One may conjecture over the emphasis placed on this incident, perhaps denoting its rarity.
ward heeler's troops in times of battle, like ward meetings of election day. The saloon keeper, the saloon and its habitués—the members and runners of the gangs—had a tremendous effect on the political activity of the working- and lower-class areas of the city.¹⁵

The saloon was such a center of political activity because of social circumstances peculiar to its immigrant and working-class constituents. E. L. Godkin, no ally of the political machine, chided anti-Tammanyites who criticized the saloon keepers' important role in the Democratic Party, saying the critics lacked an understanding of the situation.

Liquor-dealers are the medium, and the only medium, through which political preaching or control can reach a very large body of the voters of the city. The liquor-dealer is their guide, philosopher, and creditor. He sees them more frequently and familiarly than anybody

else, and is the person through whom the news and meaning of what passes in the upper regions of city politics reach them. The selection of such men as the Boss's advisers and lieutenants, the captains of hundreds and fifties, is therefore not only expedient but necessary. They are the natural administrators of Boss government. The notion that city missionaries or Republican philanthropists, or scholars and gentlemen from Fifth Avenue, can be substituted for them is absurd. . . . 16

The centrality of the saloon to the Sixth Ward's social life placed it in a paramount political position. Certain trades used the saloon as a meeting place and center for congregation; for example, longshoremen would inhabit the bars while waiting for ships to arrive in port. The saloon was a place for camaraderie, a place to relax after work, to take a rest in if the work was out of doors, or to celebrate in after completing a job. In the rapidly industrializing Sixth Ward, the saloon may have performed an important social role by providing a place for the continuation of pre-industrial drinking habits in the midst of work-situations which may have militated against them. The saloon was also the center for popular forms of entertainment, often of an illicit nature, including boxing and gambling. The saloons often had a neighborhood focus, its "regulars" having residence, work or nativity in common.

The immigrant working-class saloon may have reinforced class

16 The Nation, 4 November 1875, p. 288, cited in Alexander B. Callow, Jr., The Tweed Ring (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 193-194. One might say that the post-Civil War Democratic Party machine was a bit more rationalized, bureaucratized and centralized than its ante-bellum counterpart (see "The Evolution of the Gang").
and ethnic cultures, which perhaps helped to senationalize its role in the community to outsiders: "the absence of time limits," Jon Kingsdale has written, "the stimulus to uninhibited self-expression, the lack of any goal-oriented activity . . . made them (the saloons) a purely nonproductive, leisurely institution, reflecting working class values in general. . . ." 17

The saloon by the mid-nineteenth century was the focal point for male residents' leisure time (although women were sometimes depicted in lower-class bars in contemporary writings). It was these saloon habitués who most likely often made up the gangs of the area, and it was this central social and political institution which would be perceived by the Sixth Ward's residents as threatened by the Liquor Excise Law.

17 Man, "The Irish in New York," p. 94; Bruce Laurie, "'Nothing on Compulsion': Life Styles of Philadelphia Artisans, 1820-1850," Labor History, 15 (Summer, 1974), pp. 346-347, which suggests that the tavern's population increased dramatically on Sunday nights and during the winter when work slowed; Jon M. Kingsdale, "The 'Poor Man's Club': Social Functions of the Urban Working-Class Saloon," American Quarterly, 25 (October, 1973), pp. 487-488, passim; E. C. Moore, "The Social Value of the Saloon," American Journal of Sociology, 3 (July, 1897), pp. 1-12; Rorabaugh, "Rising Democratic Spirits," pp. 144-146, for political identification through the social and cultural uses of liquor. Lynn Hollen Lees, "Social Change and Social Stability Among the London Irish, 1830-1870" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1969), pp. 223-225, describes the proliferation of bars and pubs in London's Irish neighborhoods in the same period, performing the same social functions. "Not only were men drawn into them for political reasons, but whole neighborhoods used the local pub instead of their own inadequate housing as the center for entertaining, visiting, and exchanging information" (225).
Another popular institution around which gang activity was centered was the volunteer fire company. The "Dead Rabbits" and Bowery Boys were both allied in some way to fire companies in the area, a position in a brigade being either synonymous or closely affiliated with gang membership. Perhaps one can denote gang "territory" from the location of the fire-houses they were allied with (see Map #1). Like the gangs, fire companies could be identified by their political or ethnic affiliations, lines along which they divided, and through the 1840's and 1850's increasingly fought. It was during the 1850's particularly that the ethnic makeup of the fire department changed considerably, the number of Irish members increasing from 14.7 percent of the force in 1850 to 37.8 percent in 1860, concentrating in the Irish wards of the city. The companies thus became ethnic and political strongholds, usually reflecting the surrounding residential area. This exacerbated hostility between companies, contributing to and reflecting the nativist conflicts of the era. The fire companies, like the gangs, attracted youthful "auxiliaries" to them, further blurring the distinction of membership, and adding to their numbers and strength.¹⁸

¹⁸ Browne, The Great Metropolis, pp. 562-563 (the Bowery Boys and the fire department); Ernst, "The One and Only Mike Walsh," p. 46 (Walsh was a member of Red Rover Engine Co. No. 34); Johnson, "The Search for an Urban Discipline," pp. 95-96, describes gang affiliations with volunteer fire companies in Philadelphia in the 1840's; Richard B. Calhoun, "From Community to Metropolis: Fire Protection
The political and ethnic hostility reflected in fire company rivalries often resulted in warfare between brigades rushing to fires. Deplored by the middle and upper classes, fire company races and battles were a major popular spectator "sport" of the era (as were many gang battles, although the two were often difficult to distinguish), huge crowds of sympathizers and onlookers gathering to watch the action. The conflicts ranged from minor scuffles to vicious warfare. The fighting was partially the result of ethnic and political hostilities, but the popularity of such "sport" and the fire companies' following in areas like the Sixth Ward also attested to its role as a pre-industrial form of recreation and leisure-activity.\(^\text{19}\)


\(^{19}\)See William H. Bell Diary, Thursday 24 July 1851: "I returned to the office and in consequence of a riot being anticipated between the members of runners of Engine Co. No. 21 and 22 I remain by order of the chief at the office until 11½ Oclock. . . ."; Harlow, Old Bowery Days, pp. 201-203; Still, Mirror for Gotham, pp. 164-165. The volunteer fire department, its relationship to the gang and street fighting has been particularly well documented for Philadelphia and holds great similarities to New York: Laurie, "'Nothing on Compulsion,'" p. 349; Johnson, "The Search for an Urban Discipline," p. 92; David R. Johnson, "Crime Patterns in Philadelphia, 1840-1870," in David and Haller, The Peoples of Philadelphia, p. 98; Elizabeth M. Geffen, "Violence in Philadelphia in the 1840's and 1850's," Pennsylvania History, 36
The violence which characterized volunteer fire department activity in the mid-nineteenth century was deplored by much of the city's population, particularly middle- and upper-class residents who did not share the working class' enthusiasm for breath-taking races and often brutal free-for-all battles. The drastic rise in the number of fires in New York City beginning in the mid-1830's, although not directly related to fire company activity but rather to poor housing construction, lack of regulations and limited technology, was blamed by many contemporary critics on the degradation of a once-proud and respectable department. The fire company, once reputed to be the proving-ground for young aristocrats and propertyholders, was believed to have become the bastion of ruffians, hooligans, criminals and foreigners. However, analysis of the volunteer fire department's composition shows that the "lower-class" take-over appears to have been an illusion: from 1811 to 1860 the department, according to Richard Calhoun, was composed predominantly of "tradesmen, shopkeepers and clerks" and remained stable over that period of time. The increase in Irish participation undoubtedly contributed to the image of the fire company as a degraded institution.

But, in the nineteenth century, the volunteer fire department

(October, 1969), pp. 405-408. See also, Paul Faler, "Cultural Aspects of the Industrial Revolution: Lynn, Massachusetts, Shoemakers and Industrial Morality, 1826-1860," Labor History, 15 (Summer, 1974), p. 383, for fire companies as a pre-industrial recreational institution.
was an overwhelmingly working- and lower-middle-class institution, perhaps also reflecting the composition of the gang, in many ways its counterpart.  

The quintessential and most public form of collective violence involving gangs was the perennial election riot. After the 1840 municipal election, Philip Hone wrote in his diary, "The greatest excitement prevails. Men's minds are wrought up to a pitch of frenzy, and like tinder a spark of opposition sets them on fire. . . . Riot and violence stalk unchecked through the streets, and lying is no longer considered a crime. . . ." Every election seemed to be accompanied by rioting in the Sixth Ward of the city: in 1834, fierce fighting between Whigs and Irish Democrats took place in that area; in 1842, the Spartan Band and Faugh-a-Ballaghs fought it out; in 1848, Tom Hyer's faction contended with Yankee Sullivan's gang. Democratic factions fought, Irish Catholics opposing Irish Protestants, nativists against immigrants. "In New York and Philadelphia," Ray A. Billington, the historian of nativism, has written, "each election after 1834 was the occasion for violent  

\(^{20}\)Calhoun, "From Community to Metropolis," Ch. IV passim (on rowdies), pp. 136-148 (on composition of department). Calhoun does note that the firemen were composed of increasingly less-propertied skilled workers (see Appendix C, pp. 354-356). See also Laurie, "Fire Companies and Gangs in Southwark," pp. 82-83, who finds the fire companies performing as social centers for propertyless wage-earners, finding the Philadelphia volunteers came mainly from traditional crafts like tailoring and shoemaking, rather than from more innovative and rationalized factory labor (in effect, the fire department was quickly becoming a relic of the pre-industrial past).
street-fighting between Irish factions or between natives and foreigners.\textsuperscript{21}

This violence arose out of the economic and social transformations of the period, related to the urbanization and industrialization processes particularly affecting a working-class ward. Herbert Gutman has noted that there appears to have been a "relationship between the decline of pre-modern lower-class entertainments and the rise of modern political 'machines.'" The Tammany Democratic Party in particular was able to adapt "older forms of popular entertainment and ritual to changing needs." Wild celebrations, fire company warfare, gang-fighting and election rioting could have been adaptations of pre-industrial traditions, transformed and permutated in an urban and industrializing setting. Mike Walsh understood this well:

The gloomy, churlish, money-worshipping, all-pervading spirit of the age has swept nearly all the poetry of life out of the poor man's sphere, so that little is left him during the sad interims which occur in his life of toil, beyond an opportunity of pondering on his little wrongs. Ballad-singing, street dancing, tumbling, public games, all are either prohibited or

discountenanced, so that Fourth of July and election sports alone remain. No wonder then, that thousands of poor men flock to Tammany and the neighboring houses on such occasions to get a taste of the equality which they hear so much preached, but never, save there, see even partially practised.22

Even the Irish News, which vilified poor-Irish rioters, called for the boisterous and exuberant celebration of Independence Day. The newspaper saw the holiday as a break from the temperate and disciplined life of the responsible Irish-American, instructing him that:

to send forth the cheer of victory and defiance upon such an occasion, is a sacred duty. It is meet that the Fourth of July should be honored as a national holiday; it is wise that the rising generation, and the masses absorbed in the worldly pursuits of the age—pursuits which know neither rest or pause—should have their commercial services disturbed by the booming of the cannon, and the hosannas of the people. . . .23

The Democratic Party clearly was aware of this social need and exploited it accordingly: cases of assault and battery arising out of election fracasses were often met by judicial mercy. It is evident that the political party, particularly the Tammany Democracy in New York, was both responsive to and exploitative of such working-class appreciations of violence and recreation.24 But, this "transformation" of


23 Irish News, 4 July 1857.

24 Miller, "The Legitimation of the London and New York City Police," p. 272 (judicial leniency, which often
an exuberant, if brutal, pre-industrial tradition was transitional. It characterized a relatively brief period in urban politics and soon diminished.

The Gang and Ireland

What forces contributed to the formation of the gang in the Sixth Ward of antebellum New York City? The appearance of the gang has often been attributed to the tensions and disorganization which accompanied the immigration experience, in this case the trip across the Atlantic from Ireland. In order to investigate the sources of gang activity, it is first necessary to comprehend the ethnic composition of the ward to ascertain the predominance of the Irish in the area. Then, contemporary and later perceptions of the Irish immigrant are examined to elucidate theories about the bases of antebellum urban violence and gang activity, and to see if these analyses are validated by what has been learned of life in the Sixth Ward. Finally, cultural and social organization in pre-famine Ireland is investigated to see if antecedents of gang activity can be found there.

By 1860, New York was reputed to be the largest Irish city in the world, and the Sixth Ward the largest Irish community in the nation. Out of a total city population of 805,651, 383,717 (47.6 percent) were foreign-born, 203,740 of that number of Irish nativity. One-half of the 2,671,891 immigrants who landed in New York City from 1847 to 1860 was from Ireland. When the Civil War began, one out of every four people in the city had been born in Ireland.25

The heavy Irish immigration of the 1840's and 1850's transformed the composition of the Irish-American population. Previously, the majority of Irish immigrants were Presbyterian and Protestant farmers or artisans from Ulster, Dublin or the Protestant enclaves in southern Ireland. But by the 1840's, the vast majority of Irish immigrants were Catholic, a veritable flood of southwestern rural Irish fleeing from intolerable social and economic conditions, the result of British rule, Irish rural administration and repeated famines. This change in the religious and class composition of Irish immigration created sharp rifts in the Irish-American community.26

25 Man, "The Irish in New York," p. 90; Dolan, The Immigrant Church, p. 27. 1,107,034 of the immigrants landing in New York City from 1847 to 1860 were Irish, but Man notes that many of the 315,625 who were listed as English were really from Ireland (90). Oliver MacDonough, "Irish Emigration to the United States of America and the British Colonies During the Famine," in R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams, eds., The Great Famine: Studies in Irish History, 1845-52 (New York: New York University Press, 1957), p. 376.

26 Ernst, Immigrant Life in New York City, p. 23;
By the third decade of the nineteenth century, the lower part of Manhattan had become the haven for foreign-born New Yorkers. In this period, the lower wards of the city changed rapidly as the wealthy residents left their homes and moved uptown, away from the increasing industrial activity of the area and the alien and lower-class population it attracted. These homes were quickly subdivided and rents were raised by landlords who profited from the incoming immigrants' need for a place to settle close to where work was available. By 1810, the Sixth Ward's population was over one-quarter foreign-born (mainly Irish) or free-black, 31 percent of all aliens and 12 percent of all blacks in the city, a larger percentage of both groups than any other ward in the city. By the 1820's, the ward was already gaining its infamous reputation as a center of crime and vice, the home of lower-class institutions like the groggy, the gambling den and the brothel. The native born population diminished throughout the period as more and more immigrants settled in the area. In 1825 one-fifth of the city's black population also lived in the Sixth Ward, but by the 1840's increasing Irish immigration pushed blacks out of both their homes and occupations in the area into the Fifth and Eighth Wards. By 1855, almost three-quarters of the ward's population was foreign-born, the highest percentage of foreign-born

in any of the city's wards, and one in three people living there had been born in Ireland. 27

The Irish dominated the Sixth Ward. According to the New York State Census, by 1855 over 25,000 people lived in the area, approximately 14,000 Irish, 5,200 Germans, 1,200 English and Scotch, 1,000 Italians and Poles, and 1,500 other nationalities. Actually, the Irish composed much more than 50 percent of the ward's population since second-generation Irish were not enumerated in the census but listed as native-born. Thus, numerically, the Irish population predominated in the ward. Although the ward can be characterized as Irish, it was not a homogeneous community. To begin with, ward boundaries were an arbitrary municipal distinction not necessarily observed by residents. Then, there was a fairly clear economic dividing line along Elm Street; to the west of Elm, middle-class residents lived in more substantial brick housing, cut off socially and culturally from much of the rest of the ward. Centre Street was another dividing line; to the west of it was situated most of the area's industry, municipal institutions (courts, 

27 Carol Groneman Pernicone, "The 'Bloody Ould Sixth': A Social Analysis of a New York City Working-Class Community in the Mid-Nineteenth Century" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, 1973), pp. 23, 32, 34-35; Ira Berlin, "The Structure of the Free Negro Caste in the Antebellum United States," Journal of Social History, 9 (Spring, 1976), p. 301 (who notes the blacks' loss of skilled occupational status as immigrants competed with them; blacks were reduced to casual labor or unemployment as Irish took those jobs); Man, "The Irish in New York," pp. 88-89; Ernst, Immigrant Life in New York City, pp. 41, 193 (Table 14); Dolan, The Immigrant Church, pp. 28-29.
jail, hospital, City Hall), the arsenal and railroad depots. The bulk of the ward's population lived to the east of Centre Street. This area could be viewed as fairly homogeneous in terms of class and occupation, most people finding work in the foundries, factories and machine shops to the west of Centre and others in the shops and groggeries within the area. Yet this part of the ward was not ethnically homogeneous. Specific ethnic groups tended to congregate in certain sections: Germans concentrated around Elizabeth Street and the Bowery; German, Dutch and Polish Jews centered on Bayard, Baxter, Mott and Chatham Streets. However, even with these concentrations, ethnic groups found themselves sharing the dense and crowded space of the ward. For example, the many Jewish clothing stores on Baxter Street shared room with numerous Irish junkshops and grocers. Around the Five Points, the vast majority of residents were Irish Catholics, but Germans, Russians and Polish Jews, and--in the 1850's--Italians also lived in the teeming buildings of the area. 28

However, with the above in mind the Sixth Ward, east of Centre Street in particular, can be called an Irish ward.

28 Groneman Pernicone, "The 'Bloody Ould Sixth,'" pp. 20, 35-40; Ernst, Immigrant Life in New York City, p. 191 (Table 12), (see Tables 14 and 15, pp. 193-194, which underestimate the Irish population due to census categorization; see also Table 33, p. 222, which shows the Irish were the largest number of gainfully-employed landowners in the Sixth Ward); Smith, Sunshine and Shadow, p. 205, which reports the population of one block in the "Five Points" in 1850: 812 Irish, 218 Germans, 186 Italians, 189 Poles, 12 French, 9 English, 7 Portuguese, 2 Welsh, 39 Negroes, 10 Native-Americans.
The Irish predominated numerically in all sections of the ward, from an Irish to German ratio of 1.2:1 in the northeast tip of the ward, to 5:1 in the Five Points, to 8:1 in the Mulberry Bend area. The Sixth Ward had been an Irish enclave since the second decade of the nineteenth century. The Irish maintained and strengthened their hegemony in the area through cultural, social and political institutions for years before other immigrant groups arrived. Finally, the huge influx of Famine Irish through the 1840's and 1850's brought constant new life into Irish predominance of the area, not only in terms of numbers, but through the continual injection of cultural and social material. 29

The popular perception of the Irish immigrant, particularly during and after the great wave of migration in the late 1840's and 1850's, constituted an image of a degraded and uprooted individual, torn from rural poverty and transplanted to an even worse circumstance of urban want which undermined whatever social organization had been previously maintained. This Irish peasant was often portrayed

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29 Groneman Pernicone, "The 'Bloody Ould Sixth,'" pp. 40, 51 n. 41. The ratio of Irish to German families in the northeast tip (1:1.2) was anomalous to the rest of the ward. Cf. Lees, "Social Change and Social Stability," p. 68, in regard to the areas in London where the Irish settled, "their residential segregation was relative rather than absolute. Just as the working class lived on different streets from those higher on the social scale, the Irish maintained small, Celtic enclaves within English working-class sections." Their isolation was never complete, they did not inhabit a "shunned ghetto."
in the press and popular literature as a near-simian, with
dumb and brutish features, one hand clenched in a hairy fist,
the other swinging a club, his clothes ragged and too
small. 30 He quickly degenerated in the new urban environ-
ment, collapsing into drunkenness, crime and debauchery.
The areas of the city in which the Irish settled, the Sixth
Ward and the Five Points specifically, became symbols for
disorder and urban pathology, reputedly the scenes of
immoral and murderous acts, the home of peculiar and alien
behavior. The gang, volunteer fire company and bar were
seen as corrupt lower-class Irish versions of the previously
respectable institutions of the fire brigade, voluntary
association and the tavern. The ways of such a people were
unfathomable to the respectable working-class and middle-
and upper-class citizens of the city. Shortly after the
1857 riots, George Templeton Strong witnessed the deaths of
several Irish street-workers in an accident and described
Irish women keening over the bodies, "wailing as a score of
daylight Banshees. . . . It was an uncanny sound to hear,
quite new to me. Beethoven would have interpreted it into
music worse than the allegretto of the Seventh Symphony.

Our Celtic fellow citizens are almost as remote from us in

temperament and constitution as the Chinese."  

As vilified as the Five Points was, its reputation held some attraction for the more respectable citizens of the city. The literature of the time was replete with tales of elite sojourns into the area, alone or escorted by police. Notable foreigners usually made the obligatory visit to the area to round out their New York visits. "Occasionally," wrote William Barnard, the official chronicler of the Five Points House of Industry,

curious visitors, under police surveillance, would invade and explore its depths, and the stories of their experience and the sights which they beheld would cause a thrill of horror in the minds of the order-loving and virtue-practicing reader. As the night-time was the best for seeing the sights, those who could secure the necessary escort would sally forth with the officer and his bulls-eye lantern, to climb the stairs and search out the back tenements and see crime in its most glaring hideousness.  

The journals and diaries of the city's elite were filled with tales of jaunts into the ward, some taking

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31 See Calhoun, "From Community to Metropolis," pp. 134-140, on the myth of a degraded fire department; Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas, eds., The Diary of George Templeton Strong, The Turbulent Fifties, 1850-1859 (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 7 July 1857, p. 348. Cf. Dawley and Faler, "Working-Class Culture and Politics," noting the split within the developing industrial working class between "modernists" and "traditionalists" (those who remained committed to pre-industrial values), and the cultural perceptions of "industrial morality" (temperance, self-discipline, etc.) which "modernists" had in common with the middle class (468).

fairly regular trips, to view the exotic and illicit activities of the natives. Doctor Joel H. Ross went to the "Points," accompanied by two policemen, to see "the most perfect specimen of wretchedness and destitution that New York could exhibit." He later reported he was unable to relate what he had seen because it would offend his readers, but he could say what he hadn't observed: "not a single decent looking person."^{33}

Many went to the "Points" unescorted. Lyman Abbott somehow found his way to the "Dead Rabbit"-Bowery Boy Riot while strolling about the Sixth Ward on July 4th. Richard Henry Dana, Jr. also came upon the riot, and returned the following day to

the bad district after church, & spent nearly two hours in walking thro' those streets, & about the 'Five Points.' It is a dreadful neighborhood. The men seem so brutalised, as to be beyond hope of recovery; and there were women no better, & a whole generation of children of both sexes growing up in the midst of this degradation. The effect on my spirits was most depressing. Is there hope for man? Can the race be redeemed? Has it been redeemed? It seemed to me easier & more encouraging to destroy the whole race & to begin anew with a grafting of humanity upon dogs and horses, or even bears & tigers.^{34}

As horrified by these surroundings as Dana was, he persisted in visiting the Five Points, often after late-night dinner


parties changing into old clothes and walking the streets, mingling with the inhabitants. All these visitors to the Sixth Ward wrote of its dangers and degradation. The Five Points, William Barnard noted, "was not an attractive place to the average, respectable New Yorker, and its precincts were dangerous quarters to outsiders. It was not, as a rule, safe for decent people to pass through the streets without protection from the guardians of the peace." Yet, there is no record in any of these reports of sojourns into the ward of a violent or criminal incident, not one attack. The visitors may have been lucky, or they may have confused an alien culture and poor people with savagery. 35

This picture of a violent, degraded and disorganized Irish peasant was also shared by an alarmed Irish-American middle class. By the mid-nineteenth century, the Irish from Ulster (who were usually Presbyterian) were calling themselves "Scotch-Irish" to distinguish themselves clearly from the cultural, religious and social activities of the "wild" southern and western Catholics. However, there were sharp divisions within the Irish Catholic community as well, often along class lines. Middle-class Catholics deplored the condition of the poorer Irish in America. In 1855, the American Celt lamented,

35 Dana, Journal, 24 January 1843, pp. 119-122, 24 February 1844, pp. 232-233; Barnard, Forty Years at the Five Points, p. 9. Dana seemed to have a propensity for happening into brothels, where he claimed he simply viewed the women's degradation—to a great extent and with great detail—and then departed.
We have been recently, before and during the famine, in Irish towns and cities, and we have no hesitation in saying . . . that there is more thorough Irish degradation in the single city of New York than in all of them put together. As to the peasantry of Ireland, let them be never mentioned in the same day with this degenerate lodging-house population; no amount of physical suffering ought ever be compared with the moral degradation of the transplanted city Celt, which our police reports exhibit every day of the week. . . .

The middle-class editors were deeply concerned with the negative image the lower-class immigrant brought to the Irish-American community, threatening their hard-earned status in America. The Irish newspapers often editorialized about gang- or faction-fighting and violent and unseemly behavior of young Irishmen, seeing such behavior as partially the outcome of the degeneration of the family in the city. A normative and instructional literature developed, attempting to lead the poor Irish immigrant along the path to success and responsibility in America, while preserving a temperate and nationalist Irish spirit. The novels of Mary Sadlier presented mythically pure Irish youth who respected their Catholic upbringing, avoided all temptations of the flesh, alcohol or Protestantism, and gained all the virtues of the good material life in America. Thomas D'Arcy McGee, the editor of the American Celt who after fleeing Ireland in 1848 moved from a liberal to a traditionalist and conservative position, warned against the division of the generations

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in the Irish family's transplantation to the new world. In a series of lectures later reprinted as A History of the Irish Settlers in North America, McGee pointed to the decline of deference on the part of the young, the "'smartness' of the streets" replacing familial commitment and respect. John Francis Maguire also condemned the damage he saw done to the Irish family in the city. Seeing the creation of a "dangerous class" of intemperate young men in the city, the servants of whiskey and politics, he urged the immigrant to settle in the country. In these observers' eyes the trip across the Atlantic and the settlement in the city endangered the stability of the poor Irish family, bringing out the peasants' worst features and squelching their virtues. The young Irish in particular, both those born in Ireland and in the United States, were open to the pathology, expressing the insidious effect of the city in criminal and violent behavior, personified by the gang.

Confronted by an alien and poverty-stricken people, the Protestant missionaries who began to move into the Sixth Ward in 1850 were filled with the contradictory emotions of sympathy for the residents' plight and hostility to their strange social and cultural ways. An Irish wake to the women of the Five Points Mission House was a "strange and wild scene" which had to be abolished. They were unable to discern positive elements in the ward's life, only seeing squalor, degradation and crime; a resident's insistence on a specific ritual or belief (like sabbath celebrations) was a sign of entrenched pathology. This led to such contradictory observations as those of Louis M. Pease of the Five Points House of Industry, who related how women had come to him demanding employment rather than charity. This self-possessed and responsible request impressed him, yet he couldn't help adding, "most of the profligate women were respectably, some even genteely dressed, yet their character was readily perceived." The emotions these missionaries must have felt placing themselves in the midst of a foreign and seemingly demoralized mass were reflected in William Barnard's remarks:

It is difficult at the present day to realize what a residence at the Five Points meant in 1850. It was an attempt involving self-sacrifice and the danger of personal assault, which required heroism of no mean order; and no missionary on a foreign field to-day requires more zeal and undaunted faith than did Mr. and Mrs. Pease, when, more than forty years ago, they gave themselves to the apparent herculean task of uplifting the wretched people at the Five Points.38
The women working out of the Five Points Mission House also expressed concern over their safety while walking about the dark nooks and crannies of the "Points." However, like the diarists and journalists mentioned above, not once do the missionaries record an assault. At most they received verbal abuse, accused of viewing the inhabitants of the ward like creatures in a menagerie. 39

According to Barnard, "the material to work upon was decidedly unpromising, as far as the adult population was concerned," and after a short time the missionaries in the Sixth Ward shifted their attention to the Irish children. The parents were given up as lost; their hostility to the missionaries' attempts to convert their children to Protestantism was seen as conclusive evidence of their demoralization. The trustees of the House of Industry wrote

The adults of the neighborhood are mostly Catholic, and have no disposition to enter a Protestant place of worship, even had they decent garments in which to appear. Our expectations of great results among this class are not as strong as they were three years since. . . . They seem inaccessible to any good influence, and it is only by removal and a change of circumstance, that we have much hope of seeing these barriers broken down, and a willingness manifest to listen to the truths of the Gospel. 40


39 [Five Points Mission], The Old Brewery, p. 57. See also Ross, What I saw in New-York, p. 94, who, poking through the Old Brewery, was verbally assaulted by one "greasy-looking, cross-grained rum-soaked woman" for disturbing her, annoyed at the large number of people who came and gawked for free.

40 Barnard, Forty Years at the Five Points, pp. 33-35;
It was therefore necessary to remove the children from such a corrupting and disorganized environment (even if it was difficult to show "affection for repulsive features [which requires more grace than many possess]"). Charles Loring Brace's Children's Aid Society, as well as other missionary groups, focused on "placing out" as a tactic—the removal of children from urban decay, corruption and Catholicism to rural Protestantism—earning the enmity of many Irish parents. The children, those products of "accident, ignorance and vice," according to Brace, were potentially more dangerous to society than their demoralized peasant parents:

The intensity of the American temperament is felt in every fibre of these children of poverty and vice. Their crimes have the unrestrained and sanguinary character of a race accustomed to overcome all obstacles. . . . The 'dangerous classes' of New York are mainly American-born, but the children of Irish and German immigrants. They are ignorant as London flash-men and costermongers. They are far more brutal than the peasantry from whom they descend, and they are much banded together in associations, such as 'Dead Rabbit,' 'Plug-ugly,' and various target companies. They are our enfants perdues, grown up to young manhood. . . .


Many of these contemporary perceptions of a disorganized and "wild" Irish have been incorporated into historical analyses of the period, and some of the popular and questionable tales about the Sixth Ward now appear as history. For example, it was commonly stated in the 1840's that the Old Brewery, the large building at the Five Points which had been converted and subdivided into a labyrinth of dark rooms housing destitute immigrants, saw a murder committed under its roof every night. This, Carol Groneman has noted, has been repeated faithfully by chroniclers of the city's history down to the present time. But, murder statistics of the period revealed an average of twenty-nine murders a year for the whole city. 42 Daniel P. Moynihan described the strains of converting from a rural to an urban environment, basing his conclusions on what contemporary observers had noted. "When this shift occurs suddenly," Moynihan wrote, "drastically, in one or two generations, the effect is immensely disruptive of traditional social patterns. It was this abrupt transition that produced the wild Irish slums of the 19th Century Northeast. Drunkenness, crime, corruption

discrimination, family disorganization, juvenile delinquency, were the routine of that era.\(^43\)

The ordeal of immigration for the Irish in the mid-nineteenth century has been viewed by many historians and social scientists as an alienating, disruptive experience. The Irish immigrant, it was said, arrived in America alone, having travelled across the ocean individually, his family ties snapped, cut off from traditions, his social orientation weakened. A bleak urban world of oppressive work and cluttered housing faced the immigrant. Oscar Handlin wrote about Boston's Irish immigrants:

New conditions dissolved the old ties, habits, and traditions with which they were incompatible. The mores of the peasant farm could not readily be adapted to the tenement and the old adjustments that for many years had limited the social consequences of destitution in Ireland were inadequate in urban Boston. In this society want became a malignant and resourceful adversary; it insinuated itself into personal habits, perverting human relations and warping conceptions of right and wrong. Whenever it appeared, it encouraged intemperance, crime, and prostitution.\(^44\)

Immigration had broken down the Irish family structure, had undermined peasant traditions. In new, cramped and debilitating surroundings the immigrant social structure blew


\(^{44}\)Ernst, Immigrant Life in New York City, p. 63, on individual Irish emigration; Oscar Handlin, Boston's Immigrants: A Study in Acculturation (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941; revised and enlarged ed., New York:
apart, the victim of dislocation and unresolved internal tensions, the children expelled into the streets relying on peer groups for identification and socialization. The Irish turned violence against one another, gangs proliferated, fire companies battled, political factions brawled. Such purportedly pathological social behavior has been linked by many historians and social scientists to the experience of immigration, and Irish immigration to America in particular.45

That the Irish of the Sixth Ward lived under conditions of crowding and disease is incontestable. The typical immigrant home consisted of two rooms, one measuring eight-by-ten feet, the other an even smaller room which served as sleeping quarters. Into these dark and close apartments 67 percent of Irish households crowded four or more people, 28 percent six or more people. These small rooms, often described in the most horrible terms by reformers and journalists, housed boarders, relatives and families. The tensions such crowded conditions must have created were

Atheneum, 1974), p. 120 (see p. 86 for a description of the disruptive American work experience).

45 See Oscar Handlin, The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People, pp. 4-5, which describes the immigration experience as a history of alienation and its consequences (also 155-157, on poverty and demoralization); Silverman, "Patterns of Working-Class Life," pp. 62-63 (although he does not view peer groups as a pathological form, but a search for order). See also Lees, "Social Change and Social Stability," pp. 200-201, 219-222, on the unsubstantiated claims of historians and social scientists in regard to pathology and urban life in Great Britain.
exacerbated by disease and work-related accidents which took a further toll on family cohesion. Although many children were born to ward families, one-third of the families having three or more, a high infant- and child-mortality rate decimated their numbers. One out of four infants died, and one child under the age of five out of every three perished. There was an unbalanced female-male ratio among the Irish in the ward due to the higher percentage of women who emigrated during the famine period; but Irish-American males also had a much greater death rate than females, usually the result of on-the-job accidents. This sex-ratio could be compared with the reversed situation which existed between German men and women in the ward. "Since Irish males," Carol Groneman has explained, "worked more often than German males as laborers, dock workers, in building and other manual trades, they were the most affected by accidental deaths." There was a resulting lower marriage rate among Irish women as compared to German, and a smaller possibility of remarriage if widowed (Irish widowers remarried more often), leading to a larger percentage of female-headed households among the Irish as compared to the Germans, particularly over time spent in the city. 46

46 Groneman Pernicone, "The 'Bloody Ould Sixth,,' " pp. 59-60, 71-75. The longer a family had been in New York the greater was the likelihood it would become female-headed. Groneman compared pre-famine to post-famine immigration households and found the former's rate of "female-headedness" much greater; the older the women, the longer the presence in the city, the greater likelihood of the death of the husband. See Table III-10, p. 74.
Hardship and poverty characterized the Irish family's existence in the Sixth Ward, but disorganization did not. The transference from a rural to an urban environment created tensions and strains, but it did not destroy social organization. "Although migration disrupts relationships between kin and family in a much more immediate way," Lynn Lees has written about Irish emigration to London, it is not necessary either that migrant families disintegrate or that migrants become isolated individuals. A variety of responses, including reconstruction of kin groups in cities and the retention of allegiance to clan or tribal groups, permit a stable family life to continue. Such adaptations, by reproducing in the city extended family relationships characteristic of certain pre-industrial societies, allow migrants to escape extremes of personal anonymity and disorientation, the supposed consequences of migration. . . . Migrants can remain outside the mainstream of urban life, retaining many characteristics of the social groups from which they came. Neither the destruction of family life nor the severing of ties to kinsmen and compatriots is made necessary by the process of migration.47

Using the 1855 New York State manuscript census, Carol Groneman has analyzed the immigration patterns and household composition of the Sixth Ward's Irish residents, finding that family ties endured the trip across the Atlantic and a stable family structure was set up in New York City. The Irish did not migrate individually. "Married men and women and their children, not young single males, composed the majority of immigrants. Many of those who migrated in units had children traveling with them, usually one or two children, and over one-third had more than two youngsters and

as many as six." Of 2,180 Irish families in the Sixth Ward nine year or less in 1855, a minimum of 51.2 percent (1,116 families) arrived as a unit. An overriding commitment to kinship ties was exhibited by many of those who did not come in family units; they usually sent quickly for other members of their family, bringing over relatives one by one in a chain migration, remitting hard-earned money to Ireland. "The strength of family ties," Groneman concluded, "revealed itself in these patterns of unit and chain migration from Ireland, particularly since these immigrants were fleeing in panic from the Great Famine. Even that overwhelming catastrophe did not lead to desertion of the family in order to come to America." 48

Kinship predominated in the Irish-American Sixth Ward. Relatives and neighbors in Ireland often moved near one another in the city, a correlation appearing between the county in Ireland from which immigrants came and the parts of the ward in which they settled. For example, people from County Sligo settled in the upper section of Mulberry Street, and County Cork residents moved to the lower part. The composition of the household in Ireland was often recreated

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48 Groneman Pernicone, "The 'Bloody Ould Sixth,'" pp. 54-58; MacDonagh, "Irish Emigration to the USA and the British Colonies," pp. 328-329 (migration in family units). The 51.2 percent of families that migrated as a unit is a minimum percentage "since certain types of unit-migrating families would have been under-counted. If, for example, a young woman had come with her family and later married, this newly formed family has been counted as non-unit migrating even though she and her husband might have emigrated with their respective parents" (Groneman Pernicone, p. 54).
or resumed in the United States; structural disintegration did not characterize the Sixth Ward Irish household. A majority of sons and daughters over fifteen years of age remained in their parents' households. Sixty percent of young Irish in the ward, from fifteen to nineteen years of age, remained at home (as compared to 37 percent German and 33 percent native-born); overall, 70 percent of Irish youth lived with either their parents, a relative or a spouse. Of the young Irish males who had not emigrated with kin, only a small percentage resided in the infamous boarding-houses of the area. Five percent of the Irish under forty lived in these boarding-houses (as compared to 25 percent of the German and 30 percent of the native-born). 49

The Irish of the Sixth Ward usually shared their households with kin. A large percentage of the elderly lived with relatives, reflecting peasant practices in Ireland. However, there was a similarity in the percentage of Irish, German and native-born households which shared their homes with other than members of the nuclear family: approximately 37 percent. This, Carol Groneman has pointed out, suggests the class homogeneity of the Sixth Ward and the ways that lower-class people in general coped with an environment of hardship and a situation of limited choices.

49 Groneman Pernicone, "The 'Bloody Ould Sixth,'" pp. 60-64. There is an admitted problem in the description of "native-born" in the census; Groneman notes that that designation can mean second-generation Irish, German, etc., or a descendant of the Mayflower colonists (p. 86, n. 17).
"... Sixth Warders, regardless of ethnic origins, responded in similar ways to poverty, the needs of relatives, and the lack of available housing."\(^50\)

The Sixth Ward Irish family was not undermined structurally by the immigration experience. However, the existence of a coherent household or kinship network does not denote stability \textit{per se}. Violence and alienation could be the result of tensions within a seemingly cohesive structure. As Julius Silverman has observed, perhaps "The large number of Irish males between the ages of 20 and 30, the independence of Irish boys in adolescent peer groups, tensions in the family, the schools, and the churches, and a strong American tradition of voluntary associations all contributed to the remarkably active participation of Irish 'boys' in gangs, fire companies, benevolent societies, unions, political clubs, militia companies, local tavern

\(^50\)Ibid, pp. 65-69 (and Ch. III in general, which contains a full analysis of family structure in the Sixth Ward). There is an inherent problem in utilizing census data when attempting to study kinship ties since only individual households are enumerated, a convenient categorizing procedure, but one which excludes extended kin or fictive-kin ties and other complicated features of urban lower-class life involving networks of obligation and responsibility. In effect, the category of "household" is a culturally-biased tool which may obscure patterns of family survival in a poor ward. See Carol B. Stack, \textit{All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community} (New York: Harper \& Row, 1974) which maps out the complicated kin and fictive-kin network for survival in a modern midwestern black community, suggestive for understanding lower-class social structure in general. See Stack's remarks on the inability of official welfare statistics (like census data) to reflect the true patterns of obligation and responsibility involved in child-rearing within that community (pp. 68-73).
cliques, mutual aid societies, and secret societies."\footnote{Silverman, "Patterns of Working-Class Life," p. 64. See Jonathan Prude, "The Family in Context: Review Essay," Labor History, 17 (Summer, 1976), pp. 422-436, for an insightful discussion of the dilemma historians face in studying the family's relationship to a new environment, the importance of synthesizing the usually counterposed perspectives of "damage" and "resistance": "both victimized and resilient, both altered by the conditions in which it existed and capable of helping people cope with those conditions." Prude notes (as Silverman has implied) that such a synthetic view requires "that the domestic implications of this interaction be assessed not in terms of a household's structural configuration--which often remained unchanged over long periods of time--but also in terms of the more plastic psychological and emotional elements of family life" (425). It should also be noted that the "survival structures" such as kinship networks set up in lower-class communities have their conservative and debilitating effects, conserving a way of life and a base of identification, yet narrowing choices further by placing the greatest importance on the collective network's continuation and survival over the individual's (or class'). (See Stack, All Our Kin, Ch. 7, and Gutman, The Black Family, pp. 223-224, and 581-582, n. 33).}

But, what if these social formations existed in Ireland? What if these purported results of tensions in the immigrant community, the gang in particular, had antecedents across the Atlantic? The question of disorientation and internal tensions would then have to take on another dimension, one placed within the context of rural Ireland and not only the American city. To understand how people responded to change, Asa Briggs commented in a somewhat different context, "it is important to examine what kind of people they were at the beginning of the process, ... to take account of continuities as well as new ways of thinking," and one might add, as well as new ways of behaving. It may not be a question of disorientation or unresolved tensions
and conflicts, but rather cultural and social adaptations and continuities, a violent tradition.\(^{52}\)

Before the 1830's, most of the Irish who emigrated to America came from northern Ireland or Protestant enclaves in the south. They were usually small farmers leaving behind them heavy rents, taxes and the competition of large landholders, arriving in the United States with a small amount of capital provided by the system of tenant-right (given the out-going lessee by the landlord), or artisans. These immigrants were the most anglicized Irish, not only in terms of their religious identification, but also in regard to their language, culture and trade. But after the 1830's the pattern of migration from Ireland changed, largely due to the passage of the Irish Poor Law Act in 1838. This law put additional financial burdens on landlords and led to the eviction of tenant-farmers, particularly on estates in the south and west. It was from these areas of Ireland, the counties of Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary, Galway and Clare, that the majority of emigrants to the United States now came, mostly small landholders (cottiers), tenant-farmers and laborers. These parts of Ireland, to the west Connaught, and south Munster, were the least anglicized and poorest sections of the country.\(^{53}\)


\(^{53}\) Maps made by David Doyle, University College,
MAP 2: IRELAND

Counties where:

☑ over 55% of the pop. could neither read nor write English

☑ over 45% of the pop. lived in slum housing

☑ over 65% of the pop. was dependent solely on manual labor for a livelihood

☑ all three

The southwest of Ireland was the least fertile area of the country with the mass of the population living on a bare subsistence level, the peasant farmer eking out rent-paying crops on his tiny subdivided plot of land, mainly the staple potato. All the levels of agricultural worker lived poor existences: the tenant farmer with his small holding, the cottier with less than one acre of land owned by a landlord-farmer, and the agricultural laborer with no land, often without employment and squatting in total destitution. The cottier held a slightly better social and tenurial position than the laborer; but his position too was increasingly undermined through the large landowners' clearing of their estates in the 1820's and repeated famines. "It is but truth to say;" Archbishop John Hughes of New York wrote, "that their abode in the cellars and garrets of New York is not more deplorable nor more squalid than the Irish hovels from which many of them had been 'exterminated.'" The famine only exacerbated the already hopeless position of these agricultural workers, and by 1851 25 percent of Ireland's rural population had left or died. The cottier and laboring classes virtually disappeared, as Oliver MacDonagh has pointed out, the number of landholdings under one acre decreasing from 134,000 to 36,000. Seventy-five

Dublin, based on data in Census of Ireland, 1851, calculated for the period 1 May 1851 - 31 December 1855 (British Parliamentary Papers, I.U.P. Series), graciously provided to me by the author; Jones, American Immigration, pp. 108-109; Handlin, Boston's Immigrants, p. 51; Ernst, Immigrant Life in New York City, p. 6.
percent of these poor southwestern emigrants went to North America, 50 percent of them landing in New York City. Therefore, when we speak of the Irish-American, particularly the Irish in the Sixth Ward after the 1830's, it is the Munster or Connaught emigrant cottier or laborer.54

The south and west of Ireland were the most Gaelic, least English-speaking and least "assimilated" part of the country. It was still viewed in the 1830's by the more anglicized-Irish as a remote and primitive area. William Hamilton Maxwell, the popular Irish novelist and sports-writer, who was born in County Down in northeast Ireland and spent time in Connemara on the southwest coast as rector of Ballagh ("a place destitute in congregation, but abounding in game"), described the west as

an unfrequented district, with a primitive people to consort with. With some advantages to profit from the accident [of being "thrown into an unfrequented district"], a remote and semi-civilized region was offered to his [Maxwell's] observation; and although within a limited distance of a mail-coach, a country was thus disclosed as little known to the multitude as the interior of Australia; and where, excepting

pp. 2-3; Dolan, The Immigrant Church, p. 37 (Hughes); MacDonagh, "Irish Emigration to the USA and British Colonies," pp. 328-329, 376; Emmet Larkin, "Church, State, and Nation in Modern Ireland," American Historical Review, 80 (December, 1975), p. 1248. This transformation of agricultural life after the famine migration has resulted in misperceptions on the part of historians and social scientists who, viewing twentieth-century rural Ireland, relate the social and cultural ways observed back to pre-famine times. See footnote 59.
some adventurous grouse-shooter, none had viewed its highlands or mingled with its inhabitants. 55

On reaching the town of Newport on the western coast of County Mayo, Maxwell declared,

It was the last cluster of houses arrogating to itself the title of a town that I should now meet with, for I had reached the ultima Thule of civilised Europe, and when I had given directions to the postmaster touching the transmission of my letters in my cousin's bag, I looked around me, and took a silent but mournful farewell of Christendom. 56

The west and southwest coastal counties of Ireland were the most remote from English culture. Over 55 percent of the population, mostly peasant farmers, could neither read nor write English. The typical housing was a poor cabin, often simply a shack, sheltering a family and often other kin. 57 This area of Ireland has usually been viewed as the most heavily Catholic part of the country, cut off and resistant to Anglo-Protestant influences. Yet, the influence of the Catholic Church on the population was also marginal, and many of the rites which were practiced were dominated by pre-Christian Celtic peasant traditions.

Modern Irish Catholic piety cannot be read backwards in time to early nineteenth-century rural Ireland. The Irish


56 Maxwell, Wild Sports of Ireland, p. 31.

57 Green, "Agriculture," p. 110; Doyle maps.
clergy's relationship to their congregations was radically different before the famine and after. Emmet Larkin has noted that "before the famine any effective service on the part of the clergy was severely limited by the sheer weight of lay numbers, and that up to 1840, at least, the situation had been getting progressively worse." In 1840, there were approximately 2,150 priests for a Catholic population of 6,500,000 (one priest to 3,000 parishioners; one nun to 6,500). Beyond the problem of simply handling such a large and widespread population, the prevalent misconduct of the clergy—including adultery, drunkenness, and "avarice"—further undermined any influence they may have sustained. The limited ecclesiastical knowledge of the pre-famine clergy (let alone the "bulk" of the lay population) also rendered the Church's dominance as marginal. The Catholic population's attendance of mass jumped from a small 33 percent before the famine to over 90 percent after the famine to today (the Gaelic-speaking and rural parts of Ireland, i.e., the south and west, had a smaller pre-famine attendance record than the English-speaking and "urban" areas). Before the famine, therefore, the Catholic Church's influence was confined to "that 'respectable' class of Catholics . . . who were economically better off," the class which survived the famine intact, the Roman Catholic tenant farmers with over thirty acres of land.58

58 Emmet Larkin, "The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-1875," American Historical Review, 77 (June,
The Augustinian and Jansenist theology underlying modern Irish Catholicism, with its heavy emphasis on sin and resulting sexual repression (and the tensions in Irish life associated with that repression) was not characteristic of pre-famine rural Catholicism. As David Miller has shown, Catholicism was mixed with "pre-Christian Celtic religion" and rituals attached to an earlier tradition: "celebration at 'holy wells,' bonfires, festivals attached to local patron saints' days ('patterns'), wakes and many other 'folk customs.'" Sometimes these ritual practices were successfully "Christianized" by priests, who nonetheless still possessed only a "supplementary" role. In other situations, the clergy were openly hostile to traditional Celtic customs, seeing the behavior exhibited in such rituals as too celebratory or riotous, a challenge to their ecclesiastical authority. This was especially true in regard to agrarian disorders such as the activities of secret societies and faction-fighting. However, aside from these forms of collective violence, "the customary and the canonical" sides of Irish peasant religion often co-existed harmoniously, the

1972), pp. 627-630, 635-636, 638-639. Avarice (e.g., "exorbitant clerical dues") was considered by the peasantry to be the cardinal sin, while "lust and intemperance" were viewed more benevolently if disapprovingly by the "land-hungry and poverty-stricken" people (632). David W. Miller, "Irish Catholicism and the Great Famine," Journal of Social History, 9 (Fall, 1975), p. 86; Larkin, "Church, State and Nation," p. 1248.

59 On the Augustinian and Jansenist tradition, see Silverman, "Patterns of Working-Class Life," pp. 7-8. See Appendix VI below.
clergy recognizing traditions and informally sanctioning such activity (and non-observance of Catholic mass) through such innovations as "stations," twice-yearly priestly sojourns into the countryside to hear confessions and perform mass in homes. Irish peasant religion's "customary elements" were strongly associated "with the annual cycle of agricultural activity." Festivals, apart from Easter and Christmas, were associated with important parts of the farming cycle, festive celebrations containing magical and predictive components. Boisterous and violent activity such as drinking, dancing, and faction-fighting characterized the patron days and many of the festivities provided acceptable occasions for "courting activities." Sexual expression in pre-famine rural Ireland had "a well-defined place . . . alongside, or in tension with, the sexual repression represented increasingly by the clergy."60

The Great Famine of the late 1840's has always been considered the turning-point in Irish history after which cultural, political, and socio-economic relationships drastically changed. While certain perceived changes—for

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60 Miller, "Irish Catholicism and the Famine," pp. 89-92. Citing Durkheim, Miller sees the celebratory aspect of pre-famine Catholicism as a way of dealing with stress: the threat of starvation. Joseph Lee, "The Ribbonmen," in T. Desmond Williams, ed., Secret Societies in Ireland (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1973), pp. 26-27, illustrates the priests' lack of authority in an incident involving one Fr. Patrick Nolan, who in County Mayo in 1806 tried to raise mass and baptismal fees; he was anonymously warned "on pain of death" to return to the old rates. This was apparently not an uncommon occurrence.
example, the increase in the average age of marriage—remain in dispute, other transformations are clear. In the 1850's, the influence of the church and the role of Catholicism blossomed in Irish rural life, directly related to the transformation of the agricultural economy with the virtual obliteration of the cottier and laboring classes through emigration and death. What Emmet Larkin has termed a "devotional revolution" occurred, replacing Irish culture which was transferred in large part to the United States through the mass of southwestern Irish immigration. The often violent old activities and customs were gradually abandoned in Connaught and Munster, their importance undermined by the evacuation of their adherents. As the church became more centralized and better regulated, a national and sober Catholicism became synonymous with Ireland.  

The pre-famine cultural tradition was transferred to the American city through the wave of Irish immigration beginning in the 1830's and ending, for a time, with the Civil War. "Most of the two million Irish who emigrated between 1847 and 1860 [the heaviest period of emigration],"

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61 Larkin, "Devotional Revolution," p. 639ff.; Miller, "Irish Catholicism and the Famine," pp. 91-93. Miller notes that the famine undermined the rituals' magic: "When an element in a religious structure ceases to perform its role, the structural-functionalist expects the structure to change so as to perform the role in a different way" (91). In effect, no alternative seemed to exist to the devotional revolution. Faction-fighting did not, of course, disappear completely until late in the nineteenth century, and the secret society took on a more national identity in the form of the Fenians.
Emmet Larkin has noted, "were part of the pre-famine generation of non-practicing Catholics, if indeed they were Catholics at all. They congregated in the ghettos of English, American, and Canadian cities where they acquired a fearful reputation for ignorance, drunkenness, vice, and violence." Mid-nineteenth century New York also had a dearth of priests and churches; even with the increasing Irish-Catholic population, there was little increase in church attendance. Sunday masses were not observed, and many immigrants displayed ignorance of the simplest Catholic ritual. On the other hand, peasant religious rites were frowned upon by the New York clergy; there was a controversy over the wake which the church considered too festive and a threat to its central position in the community's religious life, since the wake was largely a social event with no room for a priest. Eventually, the church incorporated and temporized the wake into its own ritual, unable to fully suppress it. "The task of the church was not only to preserve the faith of the immigrants," Jay Dolan has pointed out in his history of New York's immigrant churches, "in many instances it was to change nominal Catholics into practicing believers." Yet perhaps more than 50 percent of the Irish-Catholic immigrant population in the mid-nineteenth century, particularly the inhabitants of the lower wards, did not attend church and lived on the fringes of parish life. This, again, did not reflect pathology or disorien-
tation as a result of the immigration experience, but rather the continuation of behavior and beliefs established in Ireland and a part of a long tradition. Rural Gaelic cultural and social institutions were reproduced or appeared in adapted forms in the American city, often perceived by more assimilated Irish-Americans, as well as the middle and upper classes, as depraved or criminal organizations. 62

The Irish-American gang in the city in some sense can be seen as a continuity or adaptation of Gaelic social and cultural institutions. Two types of rural pre-famine institutions will be examined, the secret society and the faction, both with a heavy tradition of violence, to see their continuities and changes in the trip across the Atlantic (to illustrate further the solidity of certain aspects of immigrant life in the city, providing a "congenial" atmosphere in a new environment), and their relationship to the organization of the Irish-American gang.

62 Larkin, "Devotional Revolution," pp. 650-651, who labels pre-famine Irish peasant culture as a "culture of poverty"; Dolan, The Immigrant Church, pp. 56-58, 61-62, 129. See Ch. 8, "Preaching," describing the rise of the practice in the New York Catholic Church, although the sermon was of secondary importance in Catholic worship, attempting to respond to Irish oral tradition and reach the nominally Catholic community. Lees, "Social Change and Social Stability," p. 223. See Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1963, 2nd ed., 1970), p. 239, which perceives only the transfer of a vapid Irish peasant culture to the United States, permitting only a single definition and that being "high" culture; consequently, their analysis of Irish behavior in nineteenth-century American cities is lacking in detail or sensitivity.
In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, agrarian disorders were prevalent all over Ireland, usually representing a clash of popular peasant law or tradition with the laws of the British-ruled and anglicized state. Formal and informal groupings appeared as the agents of these disorders; Galen Broeker has divided these groups into three categories, classified "by organization and purpose," although they overlap: agrarian secret societies, religious societies, and local factions. The secret society was "most concerned with the economic problems of the peasants, the religious societies with the protection of those of one faith from the depredations of those of another, and local factions with whatever residual sources of violence the countryside might contain." The religious society can really be seen as a type of secret society, although responding to religious sectarian concerns, primarily the hostility between Protestants and Catholics. Sometimes clerical disputes involved the payment of tithes, and priests or Protestant clerics were the target of the societies' actions. The oath-bound secret society, however, basically arose out of agrarian, not sectarian or political, issues. It was the tenant-landlord relationship and the land-tenure laws giving the small farmer no alternatives for appeal which motivated the societies. Usually local organizations surviving for only a short time, the societies meted out punishment—often of a brutally violent nature—to their enemies, enlisting the support of the peasants in the countryside through
agreement or fear. They were loosely organized, but each organization had several classes of members. The disputes were most often between farmers and landlords, although at times laborers and cottiers acted in concert against farmers. The raids were usually performed at night, the perpetrators often in disguise (by 1835, men dressed in women's clothes with blackened faces had become a familiar procedure).

"Thus," Wayne Broehl, Jr. has written,

certain patterns of the Irish secret societies emerged. Though often politically tinged, they were most deeply influenced by agrarian tensions. Though religious differences added an incendiary issue, the most critical relationship was still that between the landlord and his tenant. The secret society was most often a short-term and local reaction to a direct, personal problem with a specific individual. There were so many of these problems over such a wide area for so long a period that it is quite understandable that the English assumed a national conspiracy.63

In attempting to suppress the secret societies in the twenty years before the famine, nearly one hundred police were killed and five hundred wounded.

The use of secret societies to settle labor disputes in nineteenth century America was a characteristic particularly strong among the Irish. The best known was the Molly Maguires, active in Schuylkill County in the anthracite coal region of Pennsylvania during the 1870's. Much of the strife which took place on public works and railroad projects in the ante-bellum period, work which employed groups of Irish laborers in remote rural areas, has been seen as the result of activity by resurrected or newly formed secret societies (sometimes overlapping into faction-fighting among Irish themselves). For example, on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal in the 1830's, the Corkonians arose in response to bad working conditions and low wages, but also acted against superintendents who tended to be Irish Orangemen (whether simply northern Irish Protestants or members of the secret society of that name is unclear). The clandestine societies arose in these rural projects where no trade unions existed, taking a traditional Irish institution and placing it in the service of a new situation. The Ribbonmen or St. Pat's Boys, one of the largest agrarian secret societies in Ireland, was transplanted in the United States during the 1830's as the Ancient Order of Hibernians. However, many of the transplanted societies including the AOH, particularly within the cities, seem to have performed the function of benevolent societies, more muted and respectable—if still clandestine—organizations than their Irish counterparts.  

64 Hurley, "The Irish in the Early Labor Movement,"
Closely related to the secret societies, yet distinctly different, were the factions which on occasion provided further manpower for the clandestine organizations. Factions and faction-fighting were most prevalent in the south and west of Ireland in the nineteenth century, a widespread and popular part of a violent peasant tradition which had clear continuities and adaptations in the United States. It is faction-fighting which appeared in the poor Irish wards of the American city; at least one type of gang in New York appears to be directly related to the faction, a clear link in Irish-American social and cultural behavior.

Although much of what made up factions and their warfare remains vague, they appear to have been social organizations, according to Galen Broeker,

formed to meet similar groups at fairs and market towns, where the contending parties could make a test of strength; motive, beyond the desire to fight, was

Ch. 1 passim. For an excellent history of the Molly Maguires, their relationship to both secret societies and American labor, see Broehl, The Molly Maguires. The church, both in Ireland and America, on the whole denounced oath-bound secret societies, although widespread dissension among the clergy took place when support of the Fenians became an issue in the 1860's. After issuing a pastoral letter in September, 1842 denouncing secret societies, John Hughes issued an "Apology" in November, denying he had condemned the respectable Odd Fellows or Free Masons. His targets seem to have been the Ancient Order of Hibernians and other illegal benevolent societies whose main threat was their implicit demand of dual loyalty to both themselves and the Catholic Church. See Donald McCartney, "The Churches and Secret Societies," in Williams, Secret Societies in Ireland, p. 73; Fergus MacDonald, The Catholic Church and the Secret Societies in the United States, United States Catholic Historical Society Monograph Series XXII (New York: U.S. Catholic Historical Society, 1946), pp. 16-19.
seldom important, though quarrels over the occupancy of land seem to have provided added incentive. In some areas, the selection of opponents was made easier by already-existing family feuds, and some of the factions—like the Ryans and Dwyers of Tipperary—were formed on a family basis. Other factions were apparently organized on a geographical basis, while still others drew on several areas—the infamous Caravat and Shanavest factions, for example, were scattered throughout five counties of Southwest Ireland.65

Armies of country people fought at fairs, markets, funerals and patterns, usually with sticks and stones although guns and swords were sometimes used. Large numbers of people fought, from hundreds to reputedly thousands. The battles ranged from skirmishes with minor injuries to vicious fighting with many fatalities on both sides. The fighting was often scheduled with other celebratory events, like annual fairs. The popular Donnybrook Fair of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was held for a week every August outside of Dublin. There, cattle and horses were traded while dancing took place every night. "The noise of trumpets, drums, fiddles, whistles, and popguns (which fond mothers had bestowed upon their children in the course of the day)," Constantia Maxwell has related, "formed a suitable accompaniment to the fighting that ended the festivities." Although the fighting at times could be brutal and the result of old feuds, often the violence had a boisterous and peculiarly good-natured quality. Sir Jonah Barrington described the fair at Dysart in Queen's County, where he went as a boy to watch the fighting, noting the members of

65 Broeker, Rural Disorder and Police Reform, pp. 15-16.
rival factions "were very good friends in small parties but had a prescriptive deadly hatred to each other at all great meetings and fairs." After battling in Maumeen, County Galway, in 1834 "hostile" fighters were seen shaking hands and embracing.66

The violence also contained its own rules, accepted by the Irish peasantry. In Myshall, County Carlow, after a battle between the Haydens and Kellys which resulted in one fatality in August, 1838, the injured appearing in the Court of Petty Sessions refused to testify about the violence or identify assailants. A better example of the rules of violence governing faction-fighting was the acceptance by wounded fighters of their injuries, fractured skulls being a not uncommon occurrence. A doctor who had treated many faction-fighters' broken heads and bones, illustrated this understanding when he described a trial for manslaughter which occurred after a man had died from a fractured skull received in a battle at a fair:

Before passing sentence, the judge asked him [the assailant] if he had anything to say in extenuation of

the crime. 'I have, me lord,' he said. 'You heard the
doctor swearing the deceased had a very thin skull. I
put it to you in all fairness, me lord, that if he had
a very thin skull, the fair of Cappawhite was no place
for him to be.' 67

Whether good-natured or bitter, the violence was a
popular rural pastime both on the part of fighters and spec-
tators. Fights accompanied other popular festivities, a
regular adjunct to events which broke up the agricultural
cycle. Men, women and children participated in the fights,
the women usually lobbing stones while the men used faction-
sticks. However, while a woman might hit a man, it was
commonly agreed upon in the informal rules of the fight that
a man could parry a woman's blow but never strike her in
return. Spectators flocked to the scenes of battles in huge
numbers; for example, in 1816 the Reverend Townsend described
a crowd coming to watch a faction-fight following the fair
in Rosscarbery, west Cork, noting, 'The concourse of people
assembled on this occasion was prodigious, for a fight draws
as many spectators as a horse-race.' Even at the infamous
Ballyeagh faction-fight, which occurred in County Kerry in
1834 where hundreds were killed and wounded in particularly
brutal fighting, hawkers set up food and drink stands and
side-shows were erected to cater to the huge crowd of
onlookers. 68

67 O'Donnell, The Irish Faction Fighters, pp. 11, 18,
50-51, 142, 192.

68 Ibid., p. 83 (Townsend). For women's participation
in faction-fighting, see pp. 58-59 (Tipperary), 83-84 (Cork),
Faction-related violence also occurred on election days in the rural south and west. Until 1793, peasants did not have the vote but often fought for the candidacy of a landlord. According to Constantia Maxwell, "skirmishing parties [were] . . . sent forth to cut off enemies' supplies, steal the polling-books, and kidnap the agents." In his late-nineteenth century novel, Charles O'Malley, the Irish Dragoon, Charles Lever rather matter-of-factly described the utilization of groups of cottiers by a candidate in County Galway to influence the results of an election. Violence related to faction-fighting was not limited to the country. There was constant rioting in Dublin in the eighteenth century. One famous feud existed between butchers and weavers, called respectively the Ormand Boys and the Liberty Boys. "Sometimes," Constantia Maxwell writes,

regular battles took place between these parties--cattle drivers, butchers, carriers from slaughter-houses, stable-boys, and drunken vagabonds from the neighborhood of Ormand Quay on the one hand, and on the other tailors, weavers, unemployed workmen, and desperadoes from the Coombe. Stones were thrown in these conflicts, the butchers used their knives, streets and bridges were taken and retaken, people were wounded and killed, and large numbers of persons carried off to Newgate.69

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Faction-fighting crossed the Atlantic with the Irish immigrants. The violence among laborers on public works and railroad projects often involved warfare between county factions. The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal project was plagued by warfare between Corkonians and "Fardowns," violence which was finally suppressed by the militia. Work on the Troy and Schenectady Railroad was interrupted by riots involving Cork and Connaught factions in 1841. Irish factions battled at the Croton Water Works project from 1840 to 1841. The violence was partially the result of grievances over low wage-rates or job competition, but faction rivalries having their origin in Ireland clearly played a major role. Labor contractors were fully aware of this and either attempted to hire laborers from the same county to avoid violence or, to avoid paying wages, encouraged fighting by hiring members of feuding parties. 70

But the most prevalent warfare between factions took place in the cities where Irish immigrants congregated in the greatest numbers. In urban areas the battles were more visible and made a greater impression on residents who did

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not share in the traditions it came out of or understand the rules governing it, but viewed such behavior as indicative of Irish degradation and criminality. Thomas Grattan, a British visitor to the United States, described the violence:

Goaded by the stimulus of ardent spirits, their natural excitability of temperament knew no bounds. The memory of their ancient feuds in the old country revived by some chance word, they rush into conflict with their fellow countrymen or in the words of the song, 'Get drunk, meet their friend and for love knock him down' and present to the amazed, amused but disgusted American spectators a scene unparalleled except between tribes in open warfare of the savages on their border.⁷¹

Commenting on the election riots which took place in the Sixth Ward of New York City in 1842, Philip Hone wrote:

The combatants in this scrimmage consisted of two factions of Irish who, to keep up a pleasant recollection of their interesting amusements in their own country, retain the designations which they had there of Catholics and Orangemen, or as the terms are softened down here, 'Spartans' and 'Faugh-a-ballaghs' . . . ⁷²

The July, 1857 riots in the Sixth Ward were also viewed by many observers as the result of hostilities between Irish-American factions, and it is at this point that the relationship between the faction in Ireland and the gang in the American city becomes evident. "We regret to find," the Irish-American New York Citizen lamented, "that some of our countrymen—though only those of the very lowest class—took:


⁷² Diary of Philip Hone, p. 596; see Maguire, The Irish in America, p. 288 for the respectable Irish-American view of faction-fighting in Ireland.
an active part in the disgraceful riots which occurred in this city on the 4th and 5th of July. . . ." The paper blamed the violence on intemperance, seeing the same syndrome between drink and fighting here as in Ireland. "Of all those evils," the editorial continued,

the faction fights at home and abroad are undoubtedly the most to be regretted; for the injuries which they entail both physically and morally on all who take part in them, are incalculable. Riots are bad under any circumstances; but they are peculiarly detestable when got up by compatriots against each other in a foreign land. Thus Irishmen come to this free country to improve their condition; and because one party came from a different province with another, or perhaps only from a different county they attack each other like tigers whenever they get together and drink.73

Gangs were often called factions in the press, and much of the behavior described above in Ireland was reproduced in the new setting of New York.

Intracommunity conflict, like gang warfare, particularly on election days, becomes more understandable within the context of faction-disputes dating from Ireland. The Sunday, July 5th riot was described in some newspapers as a dispute between a gang called the "Kerryonians" and another group. The "Kerryonians"--which some newspapers said was affiliated with the "Dead Rabbits" and some not--purportedly centered its activity in Centre Street, south of Anthony, having headquarters in a bar in that area. Although, as we saw in Part One, the details of the Sunday riot remain in dispute, it appears that the "Kerryonians" either invaded

73New York Citizen, 18 July 1857; Asbury, Gangs of New York, pp. 21-22.
another gang's territory or defended its own. As was noted previously, Irish immigrants tended to cluster in certain parts of the Sixth Ward according to what county they had come from in Ireland. For example, County Sligo residents collected in the upper part of Mulberry Street while Corkonians settled in the lower part.\textsuperscript{74} If the immigrants from County Kerry settled in a particular area of the ward, and that area coincided with the reputed territory of the gang called the "Kerryonians," we can conjecture that at least one type of gang was directly related to factional activity in Ireland, and that one aspect of intracommunity conflict, i.e., gang warfare or election-rioting (whether of a vicious or celebratory nature), was related to territory in the ward identified by the county from which gang or faction members had come.

The marriage records dating from 1853 to 1860 of the Church of Transfiguration at 29 Mott Street (see Map I) can be used in locating concentrations of Irish county residents in the Sixth Ward. The Church, founded in 1836, kept detailed records of the county of origin in Ireland of couples married there, as well as their street addresses in New York City. Therefore it is possible to make a correlation between immigrants who came from County Kerry and the parts of the Sixth Ward they settled in, and to find out

\textsuperscript{74} Groneman Pernicone, "The 'Bloody Ould Sixth,'" p. 61; for sources on the Kerryonians," see the description of the Sunday riot in Part One.
whether they clustered in specific areas. Using the marriage records from 1853 to 1857, 146 individuals from County Kerry were listed with their addresses in the city. Fifty-two who emigrated from County Kerry lived outside of the Sixth Ward and its vicinity, ninety-four lived within or near the ward's boundaries. No pattern of residence was apparent among the Kerryonians who lived outside of the ward, which is not surprising since their relationship to the church was probably of a special nature, perhaps using it simply for the wedding ceremony enroute out of the ward or city. But for Kerryonians who lived within or near the Sixth Ward, a clear pattern of clustering took place. Although individuals from County Kerry were scattered about the ward, there was a clear pattern of congregation on Worth Street between Centre and Baxter Streets, and on Baxter Street near the Five Points (see Map III). In effect, utilizing the sample from the Church of Transfiguration records, out of ninety-four individuals who had emigrated from County Kerry and whose addresses could be located in or near the Sixth Ward, sixty-four people lived in the immediate vicinity of the Five Points. This clearly correlates with the "Kerryonian" gang or faction which was said to congregate at a bar on Worth and Centre Streets and who fought bitterly on Sunday, July 5th, 1857, concentrating their warfare on Worth Street between Centre Street and the Five Points. The evidence, in the end, can only be suggestive, since the sample is small and may, through the
individuals' relationship with the Church of Transfiguration, reflect the residential patterns of a special group of people from County Kerry who, for reasons we cannot ascertain, affiliated with the church. However, the correlation between Kerryonian residential patterns and the purported activity of the gang or faction indicates a direct relationship between county of origin in Ireland and gang affiliation in New York, indicating the continuity of such behavior between rural Ireland and urban America. This may further shed light on the territory which gangs claimed in the ward.\footnote{Marriage Records, August 1853 - December 1857, pp. 161-254, Church of Transfiguration, 29 Mott Street, New York City; Groneman Pernicone, "The 'Bloody Ould Sixth,'" pp. 220-221; Dolan, The Immigrant Church, pp. 46ff. The relationship between the "Dead Rabbits" and the "Kerryonians" remains, of course, problematic.}

One aspect of both factions and ante-bellum Irish gangs which illustrates cultural and social continuity is the age-integration of their structures. As opposed to the observations made in twentieth-century studies of rural Irish community which noted age and sex differentiated peer institutions, young men congregating in their own groups separated from women and older males, the pre-famine faction included men, women and children. The role of women in the ante-bellum Irish gang in New York remains problematic, although women were reported to take part in the July 4th and 5th riots. However, it appears that gangs in New York during that period were not differentiated by age, in contrast to many historians' assumptions based on the youth
gangs of the latter part of the nineteenth century. Irish youth gangs were not a distinctive social formation in ante-bellum New York. In his Semi-Annual Report to the Mayor in 1849, Chief of Police George Matsell described the extensive nature of juvenile crime in the city. He divided the problem into five categories: children who stole merchandise from the piers; "Crossing's Sweepers," ragged vagrant children who begged on the street; child and adolescent female prostitutes; "Baggage Smashers," homeless boys who waited at steamboat landings and railroad depots, offering to carry packages for people arriving in the city; and "juvenile rowdies," boys with homes who hung about street corners, making nuisances of themselves by shouting epithets and fighting. However, nowhere in the report did Matsell use the words "gang," "band," "club," or "faction" nor any titles or locational names like those of the gangs we have discussed. Certainly, youthful peer groups existed, but the gang within the context we have been discussing could not be included in that category. The few descriptions we have of ante-bellum gang membership point to the participation of both men and boys. For example, in a letter printed in Fincher's National Trades Review in the 1880's, Richard Trevellick, "a ship-carpenter in New York in the early days of the [labor] movement," remembered that "twenty-five or thirty years ago,"

... with us, in New York, boy or man, we were rather proud to be known as one of the infamous 'Chichester Gang,' 'Sons of Harmony,' or a 'Butt-Ender.' Phila-
Philadelphia mechanics of the day—boys and men, or those who ought to have been men—knew no more coveted distinction than that of a 'Killer' or a "Moyamensing Ranger." . . . 76

The activity of factions in Ireland continued in New York City. The boisterous and raucous behavior following fairs and other celebrations in rural Ireland was adapted to election days and holidays like the Fourth of July in the United States. As we discussed in "The Gang and Politics," rioting on these occasions may have been closely linked to a rowdy pre-industrial tradition, one which political parties

76 See Silverman, "Patterns of Working-Class Life," Ch. I for discussion of the studies of peer groups and age and sex differentiation in Ireland, p. 64 for ante-bellum New York; Semi-Annual Report of the Chief of Police, 1 May—31 October 1849, Bd. of Aldermen, Documents, XVII, Pt. 1, No. 3, pp. 58–66; Maguire, The Irish in America, pp. 234–235 on youthful Irish "street Arabs"; George E. McNeill, ed., The Labor Movement, the Problem of To-day (Boston: A. M. Bridgman & Co., 1887), pp. 341, 344 (Trevellick); Man, "The Irish in New York," p. 94. Cf., Johnson, "The Search for an Urban Discipline," which emphasizes ante-bellum youth gangs in Philadelphia, but whose evidence remains contradictory (see n. 3); see also Stewart Cullin, "Street Games of Boys in Brooklyn, N.Y.," Journal of American Folklore, IV (July-September, 1891), pp. 235–237, which lists names of mid-nineteenth century Philadelphia gangs and their territories, assuming without illustrating that they were youth gangs (courtesy of Leonard Ellis and Julius Silverman). However, an anonymously written pamphlet, Life and Adventures of Charles Anderson Chester, the Notorious Leader of the Philadelphia "Killers" (Philadelphia: Yates & Smith, 1850), pp. 27–28, describes an age-integrated gang; as does the description of a late nineteenth-century Philadelphia gang in the memoirs of William Z. Foster, Pages from a Worker's Life (New York: International Publishers, 1939), telling the story of the "Bulldogs," a large (500 members) Irish gang ostensibly dating from before the Civil War, with three age groups: young boys, youths, and grown men up to forty. However, Foster noted an interesting division which may illuminate gang activity in general: "These sub-gangs operated as separate units unless there was a general mobilization on Election night, Halloween, New Year's Eve, to fight some other gang, or for some other deviltry" (16).
were able to exploit with great alacrity. We can further conjecture that the gang adapted the ethos of the faction in Ireland by transferring the allegiances to county, family or candidate in Ireland to a political party or political faction in New York City. Perhaps different Irish factions transferred allegiances to specific candidates or wardheelers in New York, explaining the utility of gangs in intra-party warfare. The gang may have been, in effect, an important transitional form between social organizations in Ireland and those in the American city, an old structure adapting to a new situation. By the latter part of the nineteenth century, the metropolitanization of the city, the centralization and rationalization of the Democratic Party's structure (transferring commitment from faction to party), and the change in the Irish immigrant would alter the composition and purposes of the gang in this context.

The Gang and Industrialization

The phenomenon of gang formation in the Sixth Ward can be attributed, in part, to continuities and adaptations of Irish social organizations in the new American urban setting. This helps elucidate the existence of the Kerry-onians and, perhaps, the "Dead Rabbits," both identified by the contemporary press as Irish-American gangs. But other gangs existed in the area which were purportedly composed of native Americans. The Bowery Boys was one of many nativist gangs in the vicinity of the Sixth Ward, and nativist gang
activity was prevalent from the 1840's through the 1850's. How can the appearance of native-American gangs then be explained? The adaptation of Irish social and cultural formations cannot be completely ruled out since there is a likelihood that many of the so-called native-American gangs were composed of Protestant Irish, exercising their hostility to their Catholic countrymen by identifying with nativist sentiment. But another factor contributed to the appearance of both native-American and immigrant gangs; the role of industrialization, its influence on changing habits of work and leisure, and the competition over jobs in a period of economic depression must be considered.

The Bowery Boys was reputed to be one of the major nativist gangs in the vicinity of the Sixth Ward, either encompassing or affiliated with other gangs in the area. Although evidence of a direct relationship between occupations and gang-membership cannot be proven, the repeated reference to the Bowery Boy as a butcher is suggestive. The Bowery Boys were not "murderous gangsters"; according to Alvin Harlow, "Many of the Boys were workingmen, not a few engaged in one way and another, in the butcher's trade." Nineteenth-century observers like John McCabe reported, "As a rule, he worked steadily at butchering or some other trade during the week, and paid his way as he went."  

77 Asbury, Gangs of New York, p. 28.
Bowery Boy] was not an idler and corner loungers," wrote Charles Haswell,

but mostly an apprentice, generally to a butcher, and he "ran with a machine." He was but little seen in the day, being engaged at his employment; but in the evenings, other than Saturdays (when the markets remained open all day and evening), and on Sundays and holidays, he appeared in proprium persona, a very different character . . . .

Bill Harrington and Bill Poole, two well-known nativist butchers and renowned amateur boxers, were reputedly members of the Bowery Boys. 79

The relationship of an occupation to a specific gang may help explain the appearance of the Bowery Boys. Although political nativism had been defeated in the municipal elections of 1842, the patronage distributed by the victorious Democratic common council to loyal immigrant supporters


angered many native Americans, butchers in particular. Previously the markets had been under the control of native Americans; but now butchers found themselves competing with Irishmen and, according to Louis Scisco, "subject to oversight by Irish clerks, weighers and watchmen." The markets at once became a focal point of nativist activity. This was a part of the economic nativism of the 1840's, the response of native Americans to immigrant competition for a limited number of jobs in a depressed economy. Although continued depression and sporadic employment plagued the 1850's, economic nativism waned, as Carl Degler has pointed out. Yet, the continuance of political nativism and cultural hostility to Irish-Catholicism sustained working-class sentiments first born in the 1840's. The native-American gang to some extent may have first appeared as an economic interest group, affiliated in some way with the American Republican Party, later to take on a social and political life of its own into the 1850's. 80

80 Louis D. Scisco, Political Nativism in New York State (New York: Columbia University Press, 1901), p. 39; Robert Ernst, "Economic Nativism in New York City During the 1840's," New York History, 29 (April, 1948), p. 176. See Carl N. Degler, "Labor in the Economy and Politics of New York City, 1850-1860; A Study of the Impact of Early Industrialism" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1952), Ch. 6, for the decline of economic nativism, which he separates entirely from the political nativism of the 1850's. See also, Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men, p. 260, for the important distinction between nativism as a cultural impulse and as a political one, helping to explain continuing nativist sentiment beyond the time of the Know-Nothings' strength.
Although no other gang was so often linked to a specific occupation, there is further indication of a relationship between gang membership and labor. However, much of the evidence is of a dubious nature and must be viewed with a jaundiced eye; yet the constant reference to a gang-work relationship is thought-provoking. Mike Walsh, himself at one time a lithographer, was reported to have wedded labor and politics into the Spartan Band. Writing of the Spartans in the Working Man's Advocate of November 2, 1844, Walsh hyperbolically, but not too revealingly, described its membership: "It is composed almost exclusively of honest, hard-working young men who are dependent solely on the labour of their own hands for a subsistence." Walsh's evaluation of his gang's composition was undoubtedly self-serving, but in the light of other observations it gains some credence. In an anonymous pamphlet relating the life of Charles Anderson Chester, the leader of the Philadelphia "Killers," the gang's membership was described. It was divided into three categories: young men out for excitement, a small number of "brutes," and "beardless apprentice boys who after a hard day's work were turned loose upon the street at night, by their masters or bosses."81 The most

interesting account of gang membership was that of Richard Trelillick. Writing in the early 1880's about the "educational advance made by the mechanical and laboring classes" since the inauguration of the ten-hour day, he compared the advanced made in different sectors:

The mechanics of New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore have made, I think, about five times the progress towards moral and social respectability within the last twenty-five years that the Bostonians have, simply because twenty-five years ago Bostonians had five times fewer steps to climb up the moral and social ladder than the mechanics of her three sister cities above named. While a mechanical apprentice or journeyman mechanic of Boston was just, and as justly proud of being a respectable member of society, and a gentleman in general deportment twenty-five or thirty years ago as they are to-day, with us in New York, boy or man, we were rather proud to be known as one of the infamous 'Chichester Gang,' 'Sons of Harmony,' or a 'Butt-Ender.' Philadelphia mechanics of that day--boys and men, or those who ought to have been men--knew no more coveted distinction than that of a 'Killer' or 'Moyamensing Ranger.' While Baltimorean were prouder of the titles of 'plug uglies,' 'blood-tubs' and 'roughs' under half a dozen other distinctive names than they were of being good citizens or skillful mechanics. 82

the late nineteenth century Bulldogs in Pages from a Worker's Life, noting that many of the gang members were workers (16-17):

"... there was much real proletarian spirit in our gang. As far as I ever heard, scabs were never recruited in our neighborhood. Indeed, during the fierce street-car strike of the middle 'nineties the Bulldogs mobilized in full force and wrecked every car that came through our territory, although each one was manned by several armed police." (18)

Although the evidence of a relationship between labor and gang activity is admittedly impressionistic, the gang can be considered as something more than a working-class institution of leisure, notwithstanding that like the volunteer fire company it did take on that role to some extent. The tremendous economic changes taking place in New York City, and the Sixth Ward specifically, in the 1840's and 1850's—the growth of industrialism combined with a course of continual depression and inflation—must have had profound effects on working people.

In the 1850's New York was becoming a manufacturing city. By 1855, 258 different industries were producing manufactured goods; by 1860 the city was making 8.1 percent of all manufactured products in the United States. Almost 33 percent of the city's total labor force was involved in manufacturing, more than half employed in factories with fifty or more workers. Carl Degler has noted the decline of the small shop with the rise of the small factory:

Side by side, then, with the city's expanding manufacturing was a growing factory system in which a large proportion of the workers were involved. Census figures can only establish in retrospect what must have been increasingly clear to New York workers of the Fifties: the small shop, with its handful of employees, was disappearing; the impersonal, disciplining and efficient factory was rapidly taking its place.84

83 See for example, Haswell, Reminiscences of an Octogenarian, p. 355: "... they were mostly men of regular occupations and industry, the Boweryism being only their form of amusement in leisure hours. . . ."

If the impact of industrialization was beginning to be felt by the city's working population in general, the Sixth Ward's residents were probably more clearly affected. There were 148 "manufacturing establishments" in 1855, located for the most part in the western section of the ward, employing 3,520 workers. "Industrialization," Carol Groneman has observed,

had affected the concentration of workmen per factory [in the ward] as small shop production became less efficient. The majority of employees worked in factories with thirty or more workers and fully one-quarter were in establishments with over one-hundred workers.  

The changes in work habits and routine accompanying such a structural transformation included a general depreciation of skills; skilled labor was being replaced by machinery or apprentices hired in their place at reduced wages. Furthermore, seasonal and irregular employment, the decline of real wages throughout the fifties with a rising cost of living, affected more than the people working in the ward's industrial establishments. Labor historians since John R. Commons have recognized the profound influence that a decade of hard times had on the organization of labor in the 1850's, drastically changing the perceptions of skilled labor which turned to a self-interested and unsuccessful craft unionism.  


Such tremendous economic and social stresses must also have had an effect on other social organization. Trevellick's comments about gang membership coupled with the important economic and social transformations which took place in the city and the Sixth Ward in the 1850's suggest another role the gang performed.

Until further evidence about gang organization can be gathered, these conclusions must remain tentative. The transition from small, localized shops to comparatively more distant and larger factories, with a rationalized and disciplined work routine, created a more distinct separation between work and home life. In some sense, the artisan, journeyman or apprentice was becoming an "economic person," his social and economic existences splitting apart. The gang may have served, like the volunteer fire company, as a form of organization integrating social and economic life in a time of transition, relating community and daily life with the differentiating work situation. Taking Trevellick's remarks into account, the gang may have been a transitional form, a pre-industrial organization which would eventually culminate in the acceptance of labor union formation, which to a great degree assented to this distinction between work and daily life. The labor unions already in existence could

"Humanitarianism," pp. 575-576; Miller, Jacksonian Aristocracy, Ch. 6 passim. Degler, "Labor in the Economy and Politics of New York City," p. 179, n. 3, attributes the "Dead Rabbit"-Bowery Boy riot partially to the hardship of the economic situation, leading to the Panic of 1857. See also Miller, p. 185.
be considered to some degree as institutionalized acceptance of the industrial setup, and an understanding on the part of more assimilated skilled workers of the necessity for self-interested and craft-oriented organization in industrial society. But, what of the unskilled labor of the ward—a majority of the population—not directly affected by the change in regimen and structure? The transitional quality of the gang would appeal to them, particularly the immigrant coming from a pre-modern society confronted with a totally new urban work experience. The gang then, as Bruce Laurie has pointed out, can be viewed as a "relic" of pre-industrial mores, not respecting an industrial time-clock or the clear separating of work and leisure. In this sense, it attracted and appealed to some artisans and unskilled workers as a means of integrating work and leisure, a partial denial of the industrializing experience. It would be short-lived and transformed in the coming years.87

87 Evan Stark, "Political Gangs and Working Class in 19th Century Cities," a paper presented at the 1973 Union of Radical Political Economists conference, suggested several themes which have influenced my thoughts on the relationship of gangs to the work experience; Laurie, "Fire Companies and Gangs in Southwark," p. 83. Although overly schematic, Charles Tilly's distinction between small-scale, local, traditional groups ("communal politics") and large-scale organizations formed to serve well-defined interests ("associational politics") helps discern the transitional role the gang may have played, leading to the highly-associational labor union of the post-Civil War era. See "Collective Violence in European Perspective," in Hugh David Graham and Ted Robert Gurr, eds., Violence in America: Historical and Comparative Perspectives (New York: Bantam Books, 1969), p. 38.
CHAPTER THREE

THE EVOLUTION OF THE GANG

The mid-nineteenth century urban gang changed in the years following the Civil War. The "Dead Rabbits," Bowery Boys and other gangs which have been the focus of this paper disappeared. This transitional quality and change over a fairly short period of time may have been the result of alterations occurring in the city's political structure, in the transformation of the composition of Irish immigrants in the city, in the Catholic Church's increasing power, and in the industrial process. Finally, the evolution of the gang coincided with the evolution of the community; as the decentralized community became integrated into a metropolis, another function of gang activity, regulating social relations, disappeared.

The post-Civil War rationalization of the Democratic machine, particularly the rise of the urban "boss," had a profound effect on gangs. Power within the local Democratic party became more centralized and less fractured by factional

conflict. The boss, in effect, was able to consolidate violence, diminishing the need for various political gangs dedicated to rival ward-heelers. Conflict between various factions was thus reduced and the need for a variety of gangs with allegiances to different elements within the Democratic party declined.  

The aspects of gang formation which were outgrowths of adaptations of Irish social and cultural organization were greatly affected by the changes which took place in Ireland after the famine. With the tremendous loss of population through emigration and death, and the virtual disappearance of the cottier and agricultural laborer, Irish life was radically transformed. A modernization process was triggered by the famine which David Miller has seen expressed in drastic alterations in marriage patterns and religious observance; people began marrying at a later age and extreme sexual repression accompanied the devotional revolution in Catholicism. The post-famine emigrant to the United States was therefore a very different person from his pre-famine

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countryman. Furthermore, in the 1860's and after many of the new blossoming Irish clergy were "exported" to staff American churches, bringing a more stoic and repressed Catholicism with them. Emmet Larkin has concluded,

... the Irish were transformed as a people--men and women alike--into practicing Catholics. The succeeding waves of these recently created devotional Catholics brought their cultural and religious needs and corresponding values with them when they emigrated, and in doing so they helped to reclaim those lapsed and non-practicing "shanty" Irish. The newer "lace-curtain" Irish found it progressively easier to assimilate to their new environment, because they were objectively less objectionable.  

This devotional revolution fed into the growth of Irish nationalism which also had a great influence on the Irish-American community. In Ireland, nationalism began to replace factionalism. Faction-fighting diminished in the post-famine era, the result of police repression and the emigration of a whole class of people, for the most part coming from the most gaelic parts of Ireland. Organizations like Michael Cusack's Gaelic Athletic Association were created to legitimate and nationalize previously "illegitimate" factional violence, attempting to direct it into hurling.

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3David W. Miller, "Irish Catholicism and the Great Famine," Journal of Social History, 9 (Fall, 1975), p. 82; Emmet Larkin, "The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-1875," American Historical Review, 77 (June, 1972), pp. 651-652. With this drastic change in post-famine Irish social and cultural behavior, Julius Silverman's perceptions about the Irish family and its internal tensions become relevant (see Appendix IV). Furthermore, Silverman's analysis of centrifugal forces within the immigrant Irish family driving young males into age-segregated street gang peer-groups illuminates the rise of the post-Civil War youth gang as a distinct type.

The devotional revolution in Ireland contributed to the increasing hegemony the Catholic Church had over the Irish population in the United States. Although much of the pre-famine Irish immigrant community was only nominally Catholic, the nativist and anti-Catholic pressures of the 1850's must have made the church increasingly appear as an acceptable haven for immigrant culture. It allowed a certain amount of cultural autonomy in a hostile nativist environment. "In some respects," Archbishop John Hughes frankly observed, "their [the nativists'] violence was very serviceable to the Catholic cause."\footnote{Jay P. Dolan, The Immigrant Church: New York's Irish and German Catholics, 1815-1865 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), p. 162.}
authority, at first contested or ignored by a large part of the Irish-American population, became more legitimate under the pressures of nativist hostility. The result would be a more nationalistic, Catholicized and less-factionalized, divided and gang-ridden community.

Notwithstanding the role the gang played in the changing perceptions of work and leisure, industrialization would eventually erase the need for a transitional social group. Pre-industrial behavior exhibited by immigrant unskilled workers and traditionalist artisans was eventually transformed through the new industrial work experience. Less directly-violent and clearly leisurely forms of entertainment soon succeeded the gang's brutality and boisterousness; and the eventual acceptance of a clear delineation between work and leisure, the acceptance of industrial behavioral norms, diminished its role within a changing world of work.⁶

The metropolitanization of New York City and the extension and centralization of urban services also contributed to the demise of the gang. Seymour Mandelbaum has described the decentralization of New York, its division into island communities, particularly in the antebellum period. Large areas of the city were isolated, transportation lines skirted districts, and intra-city communication

was sporadic and inefficient. In the absence of a centralized administrative structure, voluntary and informal organizations like the volunteer fire department and the gang regulated social relations, defining the boundaries of a community, ethnically and territorially. David Johnson has pointed out the role gangs played as defense agents before the advent of other means of social control. "Mid-nineteenth century gangs," he wrote, "in a fluid urban situation which did not yet have institutions such as police forces and schools to impose 'correct' behavior patterns, responded to the normative values of their immediate population group." Community isolation--administrative, cultural, social, and geographical--in the decentralized city promoted the existence of the gang.  

The creation of the Metropolitan Police Force in 1857 was one part of the consolidation and centralization of authority in the growth of a metropolitan New York. In 1865, the Metropolitan Fire Department was instituted, replacing

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the volunteer brigades. These and other administrative innovations were attempts to integrate the various parts of the city into a governable and homogeneous whole, and to diminish the autonomy of local areas like the Irish Sixth Ward, both administratively and politically. Such innovations, like the arrival of the Metropolitan Police in the Sixth Ward, were not always met happily by the local residents, who viewed them as hostile cultural and political agents, as they often were. The result in 1857 was a major riot, at least in part carried out by gangs whose hegemony would be undermined by the new police. These perceptions in the end may have been correct. The rise of the Metropolitan Police may have led to the demise of the "Dead Rabbits," and the fire department replacing the volunteer structure contributed to the disappearance of the Bowery Boys. Junius Henry Browne, a contemporary observer writing in 1869, noted the Bowery Boy's end:

The places that knew him know him no more. He was a provincial product, the growth of a period. The increase of the city, . . . the change in customs, and especially the disbanding of the volunteer fire department, swept the Bowery boy from his fastenings . . .

According to Browne, following the 1857 riot, "The Dead Rabbits were actually dead after that; but the Bowery Boys lingered on until the adoption of the Paid Fire Department.

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four years ago, which put a quietus upon the Boys, and removed almost every trace of their noxious existence."\(^9\)

### APPENDIX 1a

**PEOPLE KILLED IN JULY 4TH RIOT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John T. Bernard</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>barber, 30 Whitehall</td>
<td>128 Division</td>
<td>shot Bayard and Mulberry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Buckley</td>
<td>12,13</td>
<td></td>
<td>61 Mulberry</td>
<td>shot Bayard near Mulberry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Cahill</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>5 or 6 Mulberry</td>
<td>shot Bayard near Broadway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timothy Higgins</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>11 Mulberry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Kerrigan</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>98 Baxter</td>
<td>father, Francis Kerrigan, laborer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Lautenberger</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>barber</td>
<td>32 Whitehall</td>
<td>shot Bayard; German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Lee</td>
<td>12½</td>
<td></td>
<td>91½ Baxter</td>
<td>father? Daniel Lee, laborer; shot 91½ Baxter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornelius Mahony</td>
<td>14-16</td>
<td></td>
<td>119 Mulberry</td>
<td>relative? Matthew Mahony, laborer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Myers (Meyers)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>tinsmith</td>
<td>150 or 152 W. 19th St.</td>
<td>&quot;notorious Jack Spratt&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*a Methodological Note for All Appendices: Newspapers were utilized as the main source for names and addresses. If possible, these were substantiated by Trow's New York City Directory or the Coroner's Inquisitions. Where variations in name or address appeared and no verification was possible, all variations have been given. In the case of minors, if the newspapers supplied an address and it could be corroborated with an address in Trow's Directory, the name of a possible relative has been listed along with his trade. SOURCES: H. Wilson (compiler), Trow's New York City Directory (New York: J. F. Trow, 1856, 1857); Coroner's Inquisitions; Irish-American; Irish News; Morning Courier and New York Enquirer; New York Daily Times; New York Daily Tribune; New York Evening Post; New York Morning Express; New York Herald.

*b Probably not killed in the riot."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William Pentony</td>
<td>30,32</td>
<td>cutter; Devlin's clothing store</td>
<td>123 or 125 Hudson</td>
<td>shot at window 78 Bayard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Rohan</td>
<td>18,27</td>
<td></td>
<td>194 Varick</td>
<td>shot Cross and Baxter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas C. Smith</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>51 or 52 Anthony</td>
<td>stabbed, Negro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William (&quot;Fatty&quot;) Welch (Walsh)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian boy</td>
<td>20?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bayard or Mulberry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Probably not killed in the riot.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augustus Bartlett</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>clerk</td>
<td>115 Chrystie</td>
<td>wounded 40 Bowery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Borland</td>
<td></td>
<td>cigarmaker</td>
<td>Williamsburg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Carr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9½ Mulberry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John S. Chambers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Chile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 Mulberry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morris Conrey (Conry, Cowrey)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td>22 Mulberry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Cunningham</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>81 Mulberry</td>
<td>relative? Patrick Cunningham, laborer; shot corner Mulberry and Bayard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aPatrick Dwyer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>stabbed corner Oak and James</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Perry</td>
<td></td>
<td>clerk</td>
<td>46 Forsyth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Foley</td>
<td>13,14</td>
<td></td>
<td>119 Mulberry</td>
<td>shot Bayard nr Bowery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Gloss (Glass)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>53 Mulberry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbert Gloss (Glass)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>53 Mulberry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillip Hedley (Reilly)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Harley (Havily)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>53 Mulberry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morris Higgins</td>
<td></td>
<td>coachman</td>
<td>11 Mulberry</td>
<td>see Timothy Higgins, brother, killed July 4th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aCharles Hord</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>shot Spruce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Henry Johnson</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>97 William?</td>
<td>shot Bayard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aListed, but probably not wounded in riot.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Kain (Kane)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>paperfolder</td>
<td>12 Franklin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a William Keating</td>
<td></td>
<td>fireman</td>
<td>214 E. 20 St.</td>
<td>shot Mulberry near Canal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a John Kelly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Leary (Cleary, Henry, Leony)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>tailor</td>
<td>100 Bayard</td>
<td>shot Bayard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. B. McCauley (McCalvey)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19 Mulberry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugh McGee</td>
<td></td>
<td>works for Joe Dwyer, circular-saw maker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mack</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a Daniel Malich</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>struck in head by axe; Baxter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Nehland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>shot Baxter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael O'Neill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>cut in head, Cross and Baxter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Perkins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jovino Povikony (Jovina Pookony, Irvina Pevikony, Jovine Povi King)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>powder burns face; Baxter; Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Rohan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mulberry</td>
<td></td>
<td>shot near 96 Bayard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sullivan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mott</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Toomey (Towey)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>87 Baxter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Tuer (Luer)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Walsh (Welsh)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>goldbeater</td>
<td>402 Greenwich</td>
<td>shot Bayard; allegedly asst. foreman Fire Engine Co. 21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Listed, but probably not wounded in riot.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aGeorge W. Watson</td>
<td></td>
<td>tailor?</td>
<td>516 2nd Ave.?</td>
<td>brick in head Bowery near Canal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George S. Wilson</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>attack by Dead Rabbits at 2-3 A.M. Sat. morning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{a}\) Listed, but probably not wounded in riot.
# PEOPLE WOUNDED IN JULY 5TH RIOT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John (Thomas) Bradley</td>
<td></td>
<td>tailor?</td>
<td>11 Worth</td>
<td>shot Worth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles A. Burns (Brown)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob De Confucis (De Conques)</td>
<td></td>
<td>French gentleman</td>
<td>91 Franklin (boarding-house)</td>
<td>shot and beaten while passing through Centre and Franklin, 9 P.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Donahue (Donohue)</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;boy&quot;?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fire Engine Co. 21?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Folon (Folan, Follen)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>shot Leonard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugh Golden</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Hays (Hayes)</td>
<td></td>
<td>tailor?</td>
<td>71 Duane?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. C. A. Hill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Ludovich (Ludowick)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Madley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>corner Worth and Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Martin (Marks)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>found between Elm and Broadway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John (Charles) Marshall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>shot Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John (Charles) L. Peck</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Reed (Read)</td>
<td></td>
<td>saloonkeeper</td>
<td>30 Bayard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John G. Schultz</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15 Bowery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Shields</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

*Listed, but probably not wounded in riot.*
## APPENDIX II

### ARRESTED AND INDICTED RIOTERS - JULY 4TH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pat Conklin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Conlan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a Edward Doyle (Dyer, Dye)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>39 Mulberry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ab Jeremiah Ellis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>51 Mulberry</td>
<td>relative? James Ellis, smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ab Francis Fitzpatrick</td>
<td></td>
<td>liquors</td>
<td>66 Mulberry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d Leonard Flagler</td>
<td></td>
<td>shoemaker</td>
<td></td>
<td>accused killer of Thomas C. Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a Barney (&quot;Owen&quot;) Gallagher</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>tailor</td>
<td>141 Reade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ab William Gill</td>
<td></td>
<td>bill poster</td>
<td>33 Baxter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owen Gilmartin</td>
<td></td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>94 Baxter or 36 Mulberry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a Patrick Hayes</td>
<td></td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>64 Centre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George H. Irwin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owen Kivlin (Krolen)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ab James Lane</td>
<td></td>
<td>brassfounder</td>
<td>85 Baxter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a Patrick (James) McBride</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>49 Baxter</td>
<td>relative? Hugh McBride, grocer, 64 Bayard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a, b, c, d

- a: Indicted by the Coroner.
- b: Released Monday, July 6th (no complaint)
- c: Indicted by the Coroner, but not arrested.
- d: Listed, but probably not involved in riot.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thomas McGarvey (McGarry, McGearry, McGaraghy)</td>
<td></td>
<td>horse cart</td>
<td>61 or 116 Centre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernard McGowan (McGovern, McGowen, Bervane McGovern, Barnard McGiven)</td>
<td></td>
<td>coachman or clerk</td>
<td>107 Worth?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Moon (Moore, Noone, Noon)</td>
<td></td>
<td>tailor</td>
<td>45 Essex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Mooney (Moony)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>bag sewer</td>
<td>82 Mulberry</td>
<td>relative? Charles Mooney, joiner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Rooney</td>
<td></td>
<td>laborer?</td>
<td>85 Baxter?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Sturges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Sweeney</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Wogan (Hogan)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Wogan (Hogan)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a* Indicted by the Coroner.
*b* Released Monday, July 6th (no complaint)
*c* Indicted by the Coroner, but not arrested.
*d* Listed, but probably not involved in riot.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edmund Burke</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>arrested at 88 White (&quot;loaded cane in possession&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward (John) Campion</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>clerk</td>
<td>85 Baxter</td>
<td>arrested during cruise of military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Finnington (Peenarty, Finnarty, Edward Finnerty)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mulberry</td>
<td>arrested during cruise of military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas (James, Jumy) Foley</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>clerk</td>
<td>85 Baxter</td>
<td>arrested during cruise of military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Honer (Homer)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>arrested at 88 White or during cruise of military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Quay</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>released for lack of evidence that he participated in riot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX III

#### KILLED AND WOUNDED POLICE - JULY 4TH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Police Rank</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ira Bogardus</td>
<td>special policeman</td>
<td>137 or 37 W. 36 St.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. K. Cronan</td>
<td>special policeman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Dodd</td>
<td>special policeman</td>
<td>183 Canal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solomon Ferre</td>
<td>special policeman</td>
<td>29 Chestnut</td>
<td>&quot;intelligence office &amp; house agency, 51 E. 12th n B'way&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson Haviland</td>
<td>special policeman</td>
<td>121 W. 26 St.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey Hitchcock</td>
<td>17th Ward Police?</td>
<td>46 First</td>
<td>shoemaker? Mistakenly listed as mortally wounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. W. Hubbard</td>
<td>special policeman</td>
<td>28 Grand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurd</td>
<td>special policeman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William (James) Jenkins</td>
<td>special policeman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac B. Latta (Latin)</td>
<td>special or regular policeman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Le Fleur</td>
<td>special policeman</td>
<td>2 Congress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip G. Melville</td>
<td>special policeman</td>
<td>148 Cherry</td>
<td>seaman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Mormon (Mernin, Mannon)</td>
<td>policeman</td>
<td>37 Cherry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Police Rank</td>
<td>Address</td>
<td>Remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osborne</td>
<td>special policeman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Shaw</td>
<td>special policeman</td>
<td>236 Water</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Sparks</td>
<td>special policeman</td>
<td>109 E. 16 St.</td>
<td>40 yrs old, killed early Sat. morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William B. F. Vreeland</td>
<td>policeman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX IV

THE GREAT FAMINE, CATHOLICISM, AND THE IRISH FAMILY:
A MISPERCEPTION IN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Julius Silverman in "Patterns of Working-Class Family and Community Life: The Irish in New York City: 1845-1865" (MA thesis, Columbia University, 1973) notes, I feel incorrectly, the "sociocultural sources of legitimation" of "the two Catholic traditions of Augustinianism and Jansenism" for the Irish peasant family structure. This structure, through the father's control of the subdivision of his property and the appointment of a single male heir late in his life, led to strains in the father-son relationship and the sister-brother relationship (through the male heir's control of the dowry). These were relationships of "both socially and culturally enforced subordination and repressed hostility" (5). This perception of the "stem family" is based on Conrad M. Arensberg and Solon T. Kimball's Family and Community in Ireland (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), which saw the problem of property subdivision within a rigidly patriarchal social structure as the basis of family tensions. The mother's role in relation to her children is "radically different" from the father's, an affectionate and countervailing force to the "centrifugal" quality of the paternal role of selecting an heir and
dispersing the rest of the family, the younger sons going off. The mother's role "compensates for the postponement of adulthood both sexually and in terms of civic responsibility" the young Irish male must experience. Thus, the mode of agricultural production and the system of land ownership is supported by a heavily repressive and ascetic Catholic religious tradition. "This internalized conservatism," Julius Silverman writes, "and the sporadic release of repressed hostility and sexuality in the form of individual and group violence, are the most enduring consequences of the Irish peasant social structure" (10). Yet Silverman is mistaken in equating the post-famine farmer owning over thirty acres (studied by Arensberg and Kimball) with the pre-famine cottier, tenant-farmer and laborer who did not have the land to subdivide. As Carol Groneman and Emmet Larkin ("Church, State, and Nation," p. 1248) have pointed out, "the idealized model of peasant society" of a stable farming community was a post-famine phenomenon, an effect of the famine migration. Using the British Parliamentary Com-
mission investigations of the 1830's, Groneman concludes,

Pre-famine Irish society, as well as Irish family migration, did not fit the stereotyped model of the ideal peasant community [cf., Oscar Handlin, The Uprooted (New York: Grosset's Universal Library, 1951). The foundations of that proposed model rested on ownership of property which was passed down from generation to generation. Regulation of children's marriages, maintenance of one position in the stable community, the existence of extended and three-generation households, all depended on control of land. But, most Irish peasants did not own or have secure tenancy of their property, and those who did tended to divide
it among all their male children. Thus, an idealized model of peasant life in pre-Famine Ireland must be discarded and the assumption of "breakdown" of immigrant life in America predicated on this model re-examined. ("The 'Bloody Ould Sixth,'" [Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, 1973], pp. 12-13)

Therefore, to view the post-famine Irish peasant family is to perceive a drastically changed economic and social unit. Furthermore, if the influence of the church was marginal for the pre-famine peasant, the "socio-cultural" legitimating role of the church must be disputed. The resulting tensions in post-famine family and community, its sexual repression, age-differentiation, and emphasis on age and sex peer groups (all this seen as the roots of violent behavior), must not be read backwards to pre-famine rural Ireland.
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