A Brief History of the Irish and Social Mobility in Buffalo, New York from the 1830s to the 1860s

Evan B. Kennedy
State University of New York, Buffalo State College, kennedeb01@mail.buffalostate.edu

Advisor
Kenneth Mernitz

First Reader
Kenneth Mernitz, Ph.D.

Second Reader
Andrew Nicholls, Ph.D.

Department Chair
Andrew D. Nicholls, Ph.D., Professor of History

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Recommended Citation
Kennedy, Evan B., "A Brief History of the Irish and Social Mobility in Buffalo, New York from the 1830s to the 1860s" (2020). History Theses. 49.
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A Brief History of the Irish and Social Mobility in Buffalo, New York from the 1830s to the 1860s

A Thesis in
History

By:

Evan B. Kennedy

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Arts
December 2020
Abstract of Thesis

A Brief History of the Irish and Social Mobility in Buffalo, New York from the 1830s to the 1860s

The focus of this thesis is to contribute and expand upon the historiography of Irish-American history in Buffalo, New York. Throughout the 1830s and into the 1860s, the Irish in Buffalo were able to become socially mobile and establish themselves as a powerful group for change in the city. It is important to acknowledge that the process to become socially mobile was not easy for the Irish migrants and their later descendants. There were countless hardships and struggles the Irish faced prior to their journey to the United States and after their arrival and settlement in Buffalo. The time period of the 1830s to the 1860s is truly significant because it is a formative era for the Irish.

The majority of Irish-American studies do not focus on the decades that will be examined in this thesis. Instead, most historians examine Irish-American history in the latter half of the 1800s and into the early 1900s. This is because during that time period, the Irish were well established throughout the United States. This thesis will provide insight into Irish-American history and prove how important this formative era was for the immigrant group and their later descendants. This thesis also acts as a larger contribution to the field of Irish-American historiography due to the analysis of the three wards in Buffalo with the highest number of Irish present. With this closer examination, this thesis also contributes by detailing how the Irish were already changing both socially and economically. This can be seen in their different types of housing, how long they were residing in their respective wards, and what level of skill their occupation required. Upon further examination of this era, it is revealed that the Irish were able to become a socially mobile group through no small means. With the aid of different leaders and cultural shifts over time, the Irish in Buffalo were able to achieve this goal.
In this thesis, the Irish are portrayed as one of the poorer groups in Buffalo during this era. The goal of this thesis is not to display the Irish as the strongest group in Buffalo over time, but to show that throughout the decades, they were able to solidify a place for themselves among other powerful ethnic groups. Drawing from data in the New York State Census of 1855, from primary documents found in the Buffalo History Museum and the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, and from the published literature, this thesis adds a more penetrating analysis to the formation of a stronger Irish American community in Buffalo before 1865.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

A family of Irish heritage native to Buffalo, New York many times teaches their children from a young age that their heritage should be recognized and fill them with pride. Parents and other family members often share tales about the history of their family and the impact they have had on the city of Buffalo. For some, these are simply fancy tales to entertain one another and give them a reason to enjoy Saint Patrick’s Day more so than their non-Irish counterparts. However, it is important to listen and understand that the history of the Irish in Buffalo is one of trials and tribulations, starting off on the lowest rung on the socio-economic and political ladder in the early and mid-1800s. Only in time were the Irish able to struggle their way up in Buffalo society and establish themselves as a dominant force for change.

The life of an Irish immigrant in Buffalo, New York was far from luxurious. Much like other groups who had immigrated into the western New York area, the Irish were faced with several social and economic hardships. However, one key difference is that unlike the other groups who assimilated into American culture and norms, the Irish struggled with discrimination and hatred based on their ethnic background and religious beliefs. In the 1830s, the Irish lacked political representation, social rights, economic benefits, and proper living conditions. Yet, these situations did not discourage the Irish from settling in Buffalo. Instead, as time passed into the latter half of the 1840s, their issues slowly became recognized and addressed in the form of key societal figures and leaders, such as Bishop John Timon, Thomas D’Arcy McGee, and the Sisters of Mercy who aided the Irish populace in the city.

In this study, several questions are presented and answered that provide insight into the introduction of the Irish into Buffalo, their growth as a people, the establishment of Irish
settlements, and their general placement in society and how it began to change prior to the 1830s and continued into the 1860s. On top of this, it is important to provide context of the process Buffalo experienced before it was established and incorporated as a city in 1832. The early to mid-1800s were a transformative era for the city. Transitioning into the world of transportation, commerce, and manufacturing, the city had become a hub for the importation of migrants from the rest of the United States or from abroad, in their search for settling lands in the Great Lakes area, and second as a transshipment center for the exportation of goods to be spread throughout the United States of America and the rest of the world. However, with such a transition occurring, there was the obvious need for laborers to handle the arduous yet necessary work that had to be completed. This economic growth and eventual prosperity that Buffalo had to offer were key factors that led to such a large influx of European immigrants traveling to and settling in the area. Native born Americans, along with immigrant groups such as the German and Irish made their way to Western New York and established residence throughout the first half of the 1800s. In particular, the Irish were known for their ever-increasing numbers in the Buffalo, with the rate of Irish immigration continuing to increase from the 1820s through the 1840s and 1850s.¹

To comprehend Irish immigration, one must understand the presence the Irish had in Buffalo, New York during the 1820s and their earlier contributions during that time. Thus, the first concern this study will consider is Buffalo’s social and environmental landscape before most of the Irish arrived. Secondly, what led the Irish to leave their place of origin and settle in

the city? Lastly, where would the Irish settle in Buffalo, and what was the general profile of an Irish immigrant during the different waves of immigration to the United States?

Irish immigration into Buffalo can be broken up into three waves, the first being the Pre-Famine Irish immigrants, the second during the Famine of 1845 - 1850, and the third being the Post-Famine immigrant groups. From there, one can examine the growth of the immigrant population in Buffalo, and how this group had a presence based on the sheer amount of Irish in different neighborhoods throughout Buffalo. In addition to this, the growing population allowed for a more centralized culture to form in areas such as the Old First Ward, located just north of the banks of the Buffalo River. The larger boundaries of the area consisted of Exchange Street being its northern border, the Buffalo Creek Indian Reservation being the eastern, the Buffalo River being the southern, and the canal district near Main Street acting as the western border. These borders did later change somewhat as the years went on.²

Alongside a general population growth that contributed to a Buffalo-Irish culture, the introduction of religious leaders aided in further organization of the ethnic group. For many Buffalo-Irish natives, the name John Timon is synonymous with local Irish history. The first Irish Bishop appointed by the Pope himself was in fact John Timon, more commonly referred to as simply Bishop Timon. Before delving into the role that Bishop Timon had in Buffalo, this study will also give an insight into John Timon’s life prior to his time as Bishop and will be able to show how his life aided in his mission to better the lives of the Irish in Buffalo. With the Bishop’s introduction to Buffalo in 1847, he was quick to recognize and address the common issues such as general unruliness that led to scrapes with the law, excessive intoxication, a lack

of faith amongst the people, accompanied with very poor education for this immigrant population. Bishop Timon established several religious and educational institutions to benefit the Irish people; they acted as the first few steps toward a more organized people.

Meanwhile, Buffalo’s economy and labor market were reliant heavily on the multiple immigrant groups that resided in the city. The Irish maintained a large presence throughout the city’s labor market, where they were often a huge percentage of the unskilled working class. This introduces another question this study will answer: what roles and occupations did the Irish hold in Buffalo throughout the different waves of immigration? With their lack of skills, their only chance at making a living was working along the docks as menial laborers and making little pay.

Lastly, the political aspect of Irish-Buffalo is a unique landscape in the first half of the 1800s, which must be examined to understand how the Irish were able to adjust and eventually assimilate into Buffalo’s society. During the early and mid-19th century in the United States, and especially in Buffalo, the predominant political mindset was largely nativist, since anti-immigrant sentiment had spread throughout the United States. Secondly, the Irish were supported by religious figures, and the larger Democratic party of that time would gain support from many of the immigrant groups. In addition to this, the Irish immigrants entering Buffalo were majority Catholic, which led to numerous conflicts with the earlier Protestant majority in the city. From there, another question this study asks is why types of discrimination targeting the Irish arose in Buffalo’s society. Unfortunately for the Irish, they severely lacked the

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representation needed to aid their plight while other White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant groups benefited more so in the political realm.

**Historiography**

Due to the major influx of Irish immigrants into the United States, and specifically Buffalo, during the early to mid-1800s, a large number of historians studied and wrote about the Irish and their placement and later effect on American society. With a growing interest in Irish American history, the historiographic field grew as well and introduced different narratives pertaining to the Irish. This in turn led to a debate among historians who shared different views and additional interpretations regarding Irish American history. One historian who contributed to the growing historiographical field was Kerby Miller with his work titled *Emigrants and Exiles.*

Miller’s narrative focused on the reasons for the influx of Irish immigrating to the United States and crafted a view which focused on “…exile and banishment…” Meaning that the Irish were forced into involuntary exile from their homeland due to the incredibly volatile environment that led to several hardships, which were, but not limited to the relationship held between the Irish tenant farmers and their oppressive British landlords and circumstances outside their control, such as the Great Famine in 1845. Miller’s use of the concepts of exile and banishment was met with criticism and other narratives that added to Irish American historiography. This in turn caused the debate around Irish immigration and their later placement in American society to grow.

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Following Miller’s exile and banishment narrative was historian Peter Way, whose work titled *Common Labor*, emphasized the Irish immigrant’s class status in American society as being the lowest among white Americans. In addition to this, Way also stressed how the Irish were exploited for their unskilled labor, especially during the development of Canal systems across the United States. The reason for this exploitation according to Way was due to the inability among Irish to assert themselves in society and bargain for power to improve their working conditions due to the many social hardships in place. This in turn left the Irish in a vulnerable social position.

However, there were a number of historians who developed pieces of work that emphasized that the Irish were able to gain power in society over time and engage in a pluralistic society. The first historian to examine this concept of pluralism in American society regarding the Irish was David Gerber with his work titled *The Making of an American Pluralism: Buffalo, New York 1825-60.* Gerber’s work was published in 1989 after 10 years of research and writing, including a plethora of different professional papers that added to his book. Gerber’s refers to this pluralism as a “…society characterized by public competition, conflict, and cooperation among large, complex groups composed of overlapping social solidarities.” This is important to acknowledge because it acts as the baseline for his study. Gerber argues that using these different elements of society to succeed, aided in solidifying the argument that the Irish were able to become socially mobile.

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8 Ibid. p xi.
Gerber’s book is important to this thesis due to his analysis of Buffalo and the changing status of the Irish over time. In addition to this, Gerber crafted a narrative of Irish American history which took Way’s and Miller’s perspective and combined them to craft a better understanding for the influx of Irish immigration. This narrative accepted that the Irish were forced from their homeland, but also acknowledged that a chance at a better life in America was also a driving factor. Once this reasoning for the influx of immigration was established, Gerber continued to develop the Irish experience, such as emphasizing the importance of specific Irish leadership in Buffalo. More specifically, Gerber delves into the large role that Bishop Timon played in aiding the Irish masses in Buffalo. According to Gerber, Timon was able to use his position as Bishop to aid Buffalo society through improving the diocese by giving more power to the priests, establishing churches and schools, and bringing in additional leaders to the city. However, this was far from simple for Bishop Timon due to the immense amount of opposition he and the Irish population faced from the Anglo majority. To offset this opposition, Bishop Timon went on to encourage the Irish to change aspects of their lives. This included condemning social disorder like excessive drunkenness to practicing smaller funeral processions compared to the elaborate ones the Buffalo Irish often held. Instead, Timon spoke for self-improvement through strengthening social connections amongst the Irish and through increasing their education. Eventually, Gerber stated how Irish opposition began to lessen as further social advancements were made in the shape of different institutions, such as the Sisters of Mercy Hospital. With these contributions to Buffalo society made by Timon and the Irish populace, they had managed to build up some elements, ideas, and institutions to aid in their social mobility. The Irish slowly became equals to other ethnic groups, such as the Germans, who were far better off, and other Anglo-American groups in Buffalo.
While Gerber crafted his own views on the Irish that opposed Miller’s exile and banishment theory, there were a multitude of other historians who contributed to the growing historiographical field. More articles, professional papers and books were added to the field over time which expanded this debate. It is also important to acknowledge that these pieces of work focused on other areas wherein the Irish settled outside of Buffalo. For example, one historian, Eric Arnesen wrote *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class and Politics, 1863 – 1923*.[9] Arnesen’s work instead focused on the Irish in New Orleans, where the average occupation for the unskilled Irish was to work along the docks, which was very similar to Buffalo’s Irish populace. It also expands upon how the New Orleans Irish were able to make social advancements by finding common ground with the African American populace. This reflects the pluralistic narrative Gerber established by showing how the Irish, alongside the African Americans, were able to make advancements in the labor front through a combined social effort.

Another useful piece of work that will contribute to this thesis is an article written by Brian Coffey and Allen G. Noble titled “Mid-Nineteenth Century Housing in Buffalo, New York,” published in 1996.[10] This article is especially useful due to the inclusion of the New York Manuscript Census of 1855 as a key source, which provides an in depth look into the cultural makeup of Buffalo’s different wards. In addition, the article analyzes the different types of housing materials used to build multiple ethnic groups homes. This is where the goal of the article is stated, which is to “…determine the extent to which economic and cultural

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relationships can be associated with house type occupancy.”

Coffey and Noble’s article clearly indicates this correlation between housing type and placement in society, and also shows that there were a small number of Irish in Buffalo who were semi-skilled or high skilled laborers. This in turn displays a pluralistic society at play in Buffalo’s Irish population, which Bishop Timon later used to their advantage to support the Irish working together as one people as opposed to staying divided in predominantly three different wards.

Building off of Arnesen’s work, another author who examines the Irish outside of America is Donald Akenson in his 1996 work titled The Irish Diaspora. Akenson examines Irish immigration into Australia, New Zealand and Canada and their ability to become socially mobile. An important aspect of this piece of work is the fact that Akenson clearly shows that, while the Irish were a part of diverse societies filled with multiple ethnic groups, the Irish were able to move upward in their respective social homes. Akenson’s work also emphasizes the pluralistic nature of these societies in each country. A compliment to Akenson and Gerber’s work is Malcolm Campbell’s Ireland’s New Worlds, published in 2007. Campbell’s work, which was a synthesis of his previously published articles, compared rural Irish settlers in the western United States and how they were able to adjust rather quickly in society compared to their northeastern counterparts due to a lack of hardships present in the west compared to the northeastern states.

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11 Ibid. p.1.
As the field of Irish American historiography grew, the pluralistic narrative was also explored in author Timothy Meagher’s book titled *Inventing Irish America*, published in 2000. Just as previous authors turned their attention to the Irish outside of New York, Meagher took time to examine the Irish in Worcester, Massachusetts. This is important to recognize because Meagher’s work expands upon the pluralistic nature in a society of Northeastern American Irish immigrants, who had very similar hardships in front of them, like their Buffalo counterparts. Meagher also analyzes how the Irish had become leaders in Worcester among other immigrant and ethnic groups through a combined social effort. These interactions further reflect how pluralistic this city was amongst the many different immigrant groups.

The pluralistic narrative continued to expand with modern day historians, including Timothy Bohen, a Buffalo native of Irish descent who wrote the book titled, *Against the Grain: The History of Buffalo’s First Ward*. While not a professional historian, Bohen is still accomplished in the field and continues to add upon the pluralistic interpretations of Irish American history. This can be seen in his focus on Bishop Timon and how successful he was in using social politics, like encouraging social order and less bombastic funeral processions, while also contributing to the city in the shape of schools and hospitals. This in turn led the Irish to establish a firm presence in the city of Buffalo, while also creating long lasting connections in a pluralistic society.

Another historian, much like Gerber, who had spent an extensive amount of time studying the Irish in Buffalo, is William Jenkins, author of *Between Raid and Rebellion: the

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Between Raid and Rebellion: the Irish in Buffalo and Toronto 1867 – 1916.\textsuperscript{16} Published in 2013, Between Raid and Rebellion was a culmination of Jenkin’s past professional articles that examined the Irish in Buffalo, but also Toronto. This is unique due to the fact that Jenkins was one of the first authors to examine not only how an ethnic group impacted the areas in which they migrated to, but also how the geographical region impacted their development and cultural norms. These effects also reflected how one group, the Canadian Irish, were far better off and able to move upward in society compared to the Buffalo Irish. However, Jenkins does state that the Buffalo Irish were able to make their own advances and faced different hardships that were not present in Toronto. It is also important to note that Jenkins states how the Buffalo Irish, while socially mobile, did have to rely on more corruption in the political realm over time due to the American political system, and also relied on gang-like tactics in the labor market to deal with oppressive dock worker organizations.

After reading through and examining the different narratives at play throughout the Irish American historiographic field, the pluralistic narrative took the forefront throughout a majority of each piece of work. This in turn revealed that the Irish were able to become socially mobile through specific means. The first step in this endeavor was through public competition and conflict with other ethnic groups or organizations in society. This is especially apparent in Buffalo due to the consistent conflict between the Irish and the other Anglo groups in the city. In addition to this, there was also a large amount of cooperation present in different areas the Irish settled. Over time in Buffalo, the Irish were able to make more established connections with other ethnic groups, more so after the beginning of the American Civil War.

On the other hand, it is also important to acknowledge that there were narratives and ideas that reflected Kerby Miller’s and Peter Way’s perspective. For example, Way’s perspective of exploitation and degradation of Irish immigrants can especially be seen when one examines the three wards in Buffalo in which the Irish had a larger presence in, which were the First Ward, Third Ward and Eighth Ward. Each ward reflects a different component of the Irish immigrant group in Buffalo, with the First Ward as a major example of the group being exploited heavily in the labor market. Meanwhile, the Irish in the Third Ward were far better off due to their increased amount of wealth and their higher skill set in the labor market.

While the goal of this thesis is to show that the Buffalo Irish were able to become a socially mobile group and establish themselves as a powerful group in the city, this thesis will also add to the growing field of Irish American history. This thesis not only examines how the Irish in Buffalo were able to reach that social mobility, but also how this study serves as an examination of Buffalo from 1830 to 1860. During this time, Buffalo was building the basic Irish American pluralistic infrastructure. This can be seen later in the study with the Buffalo Irish joining the Union during the American Civil War. This thesis thus adds to Irish American historiography by its closer examination of how the Irish were able to participate eventually in an American pluralist society after 1865. This is done by analyzing the different characteristics of the three wards with the highest number of Irish present that are reflected in the New York State Census of 1855 where the data focuses on the different housing stock and skill level in those wards. With this analysis, it is clear that the Irish in Buffalo from 1830 to 1865 were able to interact in a pluralistic society, which is also detailed by David Gerber. This thesis will also contribute to the debate surrounding the Miller and Way “exile and banishment” and the pluralist narrative by furthering Gerber’s point of view through the evidence provided above.
Chapter 2: Irish Settling in Buffalo, New York and the Profile of an Irish Immigrant

While Buffalo was not incorporated as a city until 1832, it is important to note the socio-economic growth taking place throughout the early decades of the 1800s, such as three major developments in the 1840s. These crises included a destructive flood in 1844, the Great Famine occurring in Ireland from 1845 to 1850, which will be explored later in this study, and the Cholera outbreak in 1849. Throughout this chapter, the history of Buffalo and its initial successes and later problems are examined. For example, the area that became the city of Buffalo went through several forms of growth due to a plethora of different reasons, but one aspect in particular can be attributed to the military presence in the area due to the War of 1812. Secondly, with the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, Buffalo had begun its transition from a traditional agricultural area into a larger importing and exporting entity. Following its completion, the Erie Canal acted as a gateway for new businesses, which also led to further economic development throughout Western New York. However, while there were these initial successes, there had also been several hardships that plagued Buffalo before and after its incorporation as a city in 1832. Some of these hardships included natural disasters, manmade conflicts, and devastating illnesses, such as the multiple outbreaks of cholera throughout the early and mid-1800s.

Initial Successes and Problems

One such hardship that set back the early development of the then Village of Buffalo took place on December 30th of 1813. During the War of 1812, the Battle of Buffalo took place between the British and the New York State Militia, which led to several casualties on both
sides. In the evening of December 30th, the British forces set fire to the Villages of Black Rock and Buffalo.\textsuperscript{17} While this event took place almost two decades before the City of Buffalo was be incorporated, it became one of the events that stunted the growth of Buffalo as a whole, and in turn, affected those present in the area, including the Irish immigrants.

Another setback for Buffalo was the multiple Cholera outbreaks taking place in 1832, 1834, and in 1849, while later outbreaks did occur, the preceding ones had greater impact. During its early years, Buffalo, along with other Great Lake cities and boomtowns were far from sanitary. In M. Stephen Pendleton’s article, “A Pipe Dream Comes True,”\textsuperscript{18} he stated that Buffalo’s sanitation was “haphazard”, commenting on the lack of proper waste disposal and how this was negatively impacting the city. A common practice was for residents to throw waste and excrement into cans outside of their homes and other businesses, and eventually the cans were to be taken to a dump or vacant lot by those willing, or the cans were left amongst the piles of waste lining the streets. However, climate had played a role, and due to the rain, the waste was washed from the street but made its way into the canal and Buffalo River. The geography of Buffalo complicated the situation for its poor citizens, many of whom being Irish, since their housing areas were poorly drained and they relied on unclean sources of drinking water. Irish Immigrants of this time, such as in New York City, were also impacted in this way with Cholera, due to the sections of the city in which they inhabited, that also had poor drainage systems. This situation thus intensified the several outbreaks of Cholera in Buffalo and other areas.

Originating in central Asia, the cholera bacterium spread throughout the continent, into Europe, and eventually to the Americas in the 1830s. It is also important to understand what the causes were that led to Cholera. According to the U.S. Center for Disease Control, cholera is caused by the contamination of water by the cholera bacterium. The bacteria continue to spread often through an individual’s infected waste that eventually entered the larger water supply, which is exactly what happened throughout the early to mid-1800s in Buffalo and other cities.

According to historian Richard J. Evans, author of *Death in Hamburg: Society and Politics in the Cholera Years, 1830–1910*, the disease was described as follows:

It (cholera) began to affect the victim through a vague feeling of not being well, including deafness. This was followed...quickly by violent spasms of vomiting and diarrhea...In this stage up to 25% of the victim’s body fluids could be lost. This led...to a state of collapse in which, in effect, the blood coagulated and ceased to circulate properly. The skin became blue and corrugated, the eyes sunken and dull, the hands and feet cold as ice...The victims seemed indifferent to their surroundings...At this stage death would ensue in about half the cases from cardia or renal failure, brought on by acute dehydration and loss of vital chemicals...The whole process of the symptoms from start to finish could take as little as 5 to 12 hours, more usually 3 or 4 days.

With the lack of sanitation regulations of the 1830s, Buffalo became a breeding ground for this disease. In addition to the overcrowded housing and the polluted water, the number of cases skyrocketed throughout the city. Above all else, Buffalo suffered from the lack of hospitals or other spaces to take care of the growing number of ill residents and eventual corpses that followed. The 1830 Census marked Buffalo’s population at 8,653. Two years later in September of 1832, there had been a recorded two hundred and forty-three cases and one hundred and thirteen related deaths. One may ask, why so many immigrant groups made the

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19 Pendleton, p. 49.
21 U.S. Census Bureau, 1830.
arduous trek to Buffalo when the city itself was home to so many hardships. The answer, while not as simple, is the prospect of a better life compared to their place of origin. This was abundantly clear with the immigrants from Ireland choosing to come to Buffalo. Just as in New York City and in New Orleans and other port cities, the relatively lesser-skilled Irish could find jobs along the waterfront, due to its lower skills needed.

Figure 1: An early map depicting Buffalo’s First Ward in 1836

Initial Irish immigration to the United States and more specifically Buffalo can be traced to as early as 1804. By 1815, the first Irish Catholic settlers arrived and settled in Buffalo, those being Patrick O’Rourke and his family.22 The area in which they settled south of Exchange

Figure 1: W. B. Gilbert. Map of the City of Buffalo. Buffalo: A. W. Wilgus, 1836
Street came to be known as the “Flats”, and eventually in 1818, the area along the Lake Erie coastline (later Fuhrmann Boulevard) would be known as “The Beach,” since its sandy character was the result of periodic lake storms that sometimes flooded the Flats. In figure 1, the blue line running to the West represented the northern border of Ward 1. It intersected with the blue at the junction of the Commercial slip that connected the Buffalo River with the Erie Canal, represented in the figure with the blue line running northwest. The latter blue line was to become the Northeast border of Ward 8, sandwiched in between the Erie Canal and Lake Erie. The Canal traced the upper left (Northwest) toward Lockport and finally Albany. The promise of the River and Canal area were the future home of the grain elevators and other commercial and industrial buildings, which would employ large numbers of the Irish immigrants. These two areas are considered the first Irish settlements in Buffalo, or Ward 1. Prior to the 1830s, the number of Irish immigrants in Buffalo was considerably low compared to the 1840s and later. According to Bishop John Timon, there were only about four hundred Irish residing in the area by 1830.  

This trend of immigration introduces the theme of many Irish migrants coming to Buffalo in the 1820s strictly for work who later left the city. What was this work the Irish participated in during that time? The answer lies in the construction of the Erie Canal. In 1818, Irish peasants flocked to the United States for work and had hopes to advance their respective fortunes through mostly unskilled labor. This was also a precursor to later immigrant mindsets based on the successes and monetary gain from their predecessors. The contributions made by these initial

A W. Wilgus, the cartographer developed this map in 1836 to properly outline the Ward boundaries of that era. This is roughly the First Ward (see Figure number 1); which was a low lying area close to the Buffalo River and Lake Erie.  
23 Gerber. p. 122.
Irish laborers on the Erie Canal cemented a place for the Irish immigrants in American culture and history, often being used as an example of immigrant success in America.

With the introduction of the Irish immigrants into the American working force, a cultural shift had taken place amongst the Irish. In Ireland, those who emigrated had not been accustomed to capitalism and instead had still worked under oppressive landlords, who had focused on exporting their agricultural goods.\textsuperscript{24} A majority of the native Irish were peasants, or tenant farmers on the landowners’ land, wherein they were forced to grow wheat, while most times they ate potatoes to get by. Once in the U.S. and working on the Erie Canal, the Irish transitioned from tenants to wage earning laborers. Meanwhile, the higher wages in the United States, compared to areas such as Britain, made it a more appealing opportunity for the Irish. However, while the Irish were attracted to the prospect of a better life through monetary gain, the harsh reality of being an immigrant laborer in a new land became very apparent. While they were earning higher wages and given chances at a better life in Buffalo compared to Britain, the wages were still dismal due to its seasonal nature and lack of working hours.\textsuperscript{25}

During the construction of the different canals in the United States, many companies developed immigrant recruitment systems to draw in more laborers to counter the lack of native workers present, which was especially the case in New York for the Erie Canal. Recruitment agents were sent to Britain to attract the Irish with the previously mentioned promise of larger wages. Unfortunately for many of the Irish, they could not afford the trip to the United States, which led to the development of canal companies signing immigrants into “limited-term indentures,” wherein the companies paid for the transportation of those who signed on. At this

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid. p. 126.
time, the Irish encountered such discrimination that became synonymous with the later waves of Irish immigrants. During the transportation of these laborers, they were provided little food from those transporting them, and often the food provided was rotten or inedible. Not only did this lead to the prospect of violence during travel but also upon arrival, the Irish laborers were far from healthy.  

Eventually the Erie Canal was completed in 1825, with most of the labor force consisting of Irish immigrants. Even with the completion of the Canal, the number of foreign laborers continued to grow into the 1830s. This growing work force became synonymous with Irish immigrants, because there was very little job opportunity for them coming to the United States outside of unskilled labor. Despite the promise of a better life, many Irish immigrants in Buffalo left the area by 1830. This can be attributed to the hardships faced in the labor market in the United States and other social discrimination the group faced. The possibility of better living conditions and economic opportunities continued to be a point of attraction for the Irish to migrate to Buffalo, New York. However, the mass of immigrants flocking to Buffalo slowed down by 1830, which can be seen in the population level of the city at that time -- listed at 8,668 that year.

**Reasons for migrating to Buffalo & Profile of a migrant**

In 1832, following Buffalo’s incorporation as a city broken into five wards, the population increased to nearly 10,000 residents--the growth resulting largely from the Erie Canal

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27 U.S. Census Bureau, 1830.
connecting the Eastern Seaboard with the developing area of the Great Lakes. Yet, the presence of the Irish was limited at the time with the population of Buffalo being made up more from other ethnic groups and Americans from New England and eastern New York. These ethnic groups formed the largest percentage at the incorporation of Buffalo as a city in 1832 due to their earlier presence.

Buffalo and Western New York in the early 1800s composed a site for intense religious revivalism and aided with the growing Protestant fervor. In addition, other non-Irish immigrants were Protestant, and alongside the native Buffalo residents, they contributed to a majority of the city’s population being Protestant. By the late 1840s, religion and spirituality took a back seat as the city and its economy continued to expand at an accelerated rate. Commercialism and the importation and exportation of goods became the priority in Buffalo’s recovery, thanks to the Erie Canal and the growing number of residents in the city. An increase in Irish immigration took place during the latter half of the 1830s and into the 1840s.

After 1825 with the completion of the Erie Canal and into the early 1840s, the Irish were laborers along the canal, filling various unskilled labor positions, such as dock hands, porters, or other miscellaneous jobs. However, the Irish were limited many times to this unskilled job market while other immigrant groups were able to advance and assimilate in a more organized fashion. Buffalo’s grain business was revolutionized thanks to Joseph Dart’s steam power grain elevators. The amount of work done, and time saved by the grain elevators was incomparable to the work being done by hand. For example, with the grain’s elevation by mechanical buckets,

almost 1,000 bushels of grain could be transported effectively in one hour.\textsuperscript{30} However, many unskilled workers were needed to shovel the grain into the bucket area, and transfer grain from remote corners of the ship where the buckets could not reach.

Following the initial construction of the first grain elevator in 1842, several more were erected throughout an eighteen-month time span, cementing Buffalo’s reputation as the “Grain Capital of the World.” With so many grain elevators being constructed, there was a need for even more laborers. Luckily, with the Irish population’s geographic location in the First Ward, right along the waterfront, they had become integral laborers for the massive grain elevators.\textsuperscript{31} In addition, the population in Buffalo was steadily growing in the 1840s, with the United State Census noting the city’s population at 18,213 in 1840.\textsuperscript{32} However, following the introduction of the grain elevators and Buffalo’s economy booming throughout the first half of the 1840s, the population increased immensely. By 1845, Buffalo’s population had reached upwards of 29,773.\textsuperscript{33}

Through the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s, Buffalo was undergoing an industrial renaissance. Author of \textit{High Hopes: The Rise and Decline of Buffalo, New York}, Mark Goldman, describes the 1830s in Buffalo along the waterfront as “…the fastest growing section of the town…where several dozen stores, warehouses, offices and sail markers…” took up residence, adding to the growing economy.\textsuperscript{34} As described earlier with the introduction of a completed Erie Canal, Buffalo had become a hub for the exportation of goods, especially grain. To support the growing

\textsuperscript{30}Bohen. p. 9.
\textsuperscript{31}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32}U.S. Census Bureau, 1840.
\textsuperscript{33}New York State Census, 1845.
economic needs of Buffalo along the waterfront, the Irish would settle throughout this specific area in the city. This event nurtured the trifecta of industry, residence, and ethnicity with the Irish laborers as a necessary segment.

There was another prominent factor that led to massive spikes in Irish immigrants entering Buffalo and the greater United States—the infamous Irish Potato Famine of the second half of the 1840s. Starting in 1845, a fungus known as “Phytophthora Infestans” had spread throughout several countries until reaching Ireland in September of that year. The fungus affected Ireland’s potatoes by completely rotting them and practically transforming them into a black paste. This was especially devastating to the Irish because of their heavy reliance on their potato crop.35 An interesting note to make is that the fungus did not have an immediate effect on the potatoes, but instead due to the lingering effects, seasons in the coming years would be more so affected. Meanwhile, the United States and other countries took notice of the growing famine in Ireland. In an article published on November 7th, 1845 in the Buffalo Courier, the author noted the devastation Irish natives were facing, calling the plight a “…most distressing event.”36 The article also ended with the British being called upon by the American press to assist. Otherwise the article predicated the results would negatively impact not only the crop but also the people.37 Indeed by 1848, the potato crop was almost entirely ruined or destroyed.38

37 Ibid.
With the existence of this fungus and the destruction of their most necessary crop there was little the native Irish could do, except starve and die. While devastating, there was a large difference in mortality rates throughout Ireland. For example, the mortality rate in the West was far worse compared to other areas in Ireland, which is attributed to the densely populated areas in the West, such as Connacht and parts of Munster. These regions faced the highest risk of death because of the sheer density of the population. Secondly, those in poorer socio-economic areas in Ireland had a higher risk of death due to their reliance on planting their own potato crops for survival. It also appeared that Ireland’s men were more at risk than the women, but it has been difficult to determine why. Debates spread throughout the country and abroad, attempting to determine the reason why the Great Famine occurred, and why it had such an effect on the Irish. Two positions grew, with the British believing that the Irish and their over reliance on the potato crop were to blame, while the Irish blamed the British and their oppressive landlords for mistreating and taking advantage of their people.

Despite the debate taking place, a point should be made that the mortality rate being so high can be attributed in large part to the ever-increasing population in Ireland. An often-critiqued component of Irish culture in the 1800s was the tradition associated with Irish marriage. In Irish society it was common practice for people to marry young and have a large family. In his study “The Population of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century”, historian K. H. Connell stated that the Irish had begun to pursue marriage at an earlier age in the latter half of the

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39 Fraser. p. 6.
40 Ibid. Page 63.
1700s and into the 1800s.\textsuperscript{41} Ireland’s population grew at a steady rate, and the Great Famine was still a reality that impacted the populace to a deadly degree.

There is also something to be said about relief and assistance provided by the British and local leaders in Ireland. Simply put, there was a severe lack of support and relief provided by those in positions of power. Again, we must examine the role played by Irish peasants and by the landlords who demanded they plant other crops, such as wheat, and maintain livestock. This was done to support Ireland’s exportation of goods, but little was left to support the Irish peasant and keep them alive. By 1847, more land had been used for the cultivation of grains and raising of livestock. Exportation of goods continued through the harshest years of the Great Famine, solidifying the suffering that plagued the Irish peasants.\textsuperscript{42} Without the necessary support from their leaders, the Irish were left with very few options: should they simply die in a harsh landscape or should they seek out survival abroad? With this dilemma in mind, the Irish looked overseas for a better alternative.

Just as the 1820s in the United States offered much for the Irish in the labor market, so did the 1840s and 1850s. Over two million Irish fled from their homes and migrated overseas to the United States in the 1840s and early 1850s. During these travels, most Irish migrants made their way through Britain and Canada to reach the United States, yet the journey was still taxing on those taking part. Just like those traveling to work on the canals, the trip was plagued with hardships in the shape of cramped space because of the sheer amount of people present, the lack of decent and edible food, and general illness.\textsuperscript{43} During 1847, almost 20,000 Irish perished.

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{42} Meagher. "The Famine Years." p. 67.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Bohen. p. 18.
\end{itemize}
during the massive migration to Canada due to several harsh conditions, such as a lack of food that led to starvation. On the other hand, of those heading directly to the United States, death rates were not as high. In addition, land opportunities grew scarce in Canada and Britain, leading to even more Irish making their way to the United States. From 1847 to 1851, a staggering amount, over 848,000 Irish, came to the United States and entered New York.44 While New York City provided the opportunities sought out by the Irish, not all stayed in the area: instead they also travelled to cities such as Boston and Buffalo.

Irish immigrants were finally able to escape the oppressive and harsh lands of a devastated Ireland. Moreover, these immigrants came with families, which acted as a support system, and they were prepared for almost anything ahead of them based on the hardships they had already endured. Unfortunately, the streets of Buffalo were not the place for immediate success and prosperity some immigrants initially thought them to be. Now, we must examine the economic landscape of Buffalo and how the Irish immigrants participated based on the average profile of an immigrant of that time.

As the businesses along the waterfront in the first ward grew throughout the early to mid-1800s, the landscape had begun to alter to match the needs of a bustling economy. The waterfront and dock became filled with several businesses and miscellaneous functions. Several businesses, such as wholesale groceries, warehouses, workshops, and grain elevators all stemmed from the “waterborne commerce.”45

As the number of Irish immigrants grew in Buffalo, the First Ward had become one of the more prominent settlements throughout the United States because of how long the Irish

endured in that area. During the initial settlement of the Irish immigrants in the 1840s, they would not stray far from the area of the First Ward and the waterfront. Surrounded by grain elevators, warehouses, and other manufacturing locations, the Irish built around this commercial construction and erected a range of housing and smaller businesses, from stores to saloons, brothels, and boardinghouses. They had also erected small shanties, simple and small wooden homes made of whatever materials the Irish could find along the waterway. However, as the next chapter explains, the Irish would also continue to move into other wards, such as the Third and Eighth ward, as the Irish population grew in number and in complexity of skills, better pay and ability to afford better housing. Chief among these were wards 2 and 3 to the north of the First Ward, and ward 8, which was sandwiched between the Erie Canal and the coastline of Lake Erie on the lower west side. All of these wards were heavily influenced by maritime trade, service, and production, with a range of unskilled to highly skilled jobs.

Figure 2: Outline of Buffalo’s Wards of 1855
Figure 3: 1833 map with first ward, and (upper left) Commercial slip link from Buffalo River to Erie Canal
Figure 4: Buffalo 1850, with commerce at the lower Buffalo River, and new Ship Channel to provide more transfer facilities
The three listed figures are all mapped out representations of Buffalo’s Wards, each providing its own importance to understanding the boundaries that were established. Figure 2 is a basic map used in Brian Coffey and Allen G. Noble’s article to provide the reader with a visual aid of the Ward boundaries in Buffalo during the 1850s in Buffalo. A complement to Figure 2 comes with Figure 3 as it is a more detailed viewing of the First Ward. Figure 3 is especially useful due to how detailed the map is when showing the connection of the Buffalo River to the Erie Canal (the Canal is depicted running roughly between the green and aqua shaded markings, in a northwestern direction to Lockport, New York.) From there, Figure 4 provides a more developed map compared to Figure 3 which provides some insight into the waterfront and the amount of growing commerce present along the docks. As previously mentioned, throughout the First Ward’s waterfront, commerce and industry had expanded greatly by 1850 and had become home to several grain elevators, or smaller businesses relating to the shipping industry. Another unique aspect of Figure 4 is the street labeling, which does represent a shift in the First Ward occupancy based on the developing streets in that neighborhood over time.47

This location in the First Ward presented far from ideal living arrangements for the Irish and marked one of the many hardships ahead for the ethnic group in Buffalo. Due to the placement of their shanty homes and the fact that the First Ward was at the lowest lying point in

47 Ibid.
Figure 2: Brian Coffey & Allen G. Noble, “Mid-Nineteenth Century…” p. 3.
Figure 3: Penleton’s Lithograph. Map of the City of Buffalo [map]. 1st Edition. 8:1. Buffalo, NY: W.W. Haskins, 1833.
Figure 4: Unknown. City of Buffalo, Canal and Harbor Improvements, Buildings, &c. Scale Unknown. Buffalo, NY: Jewett Thomas & Co, 1850.
Using Figure 2, this map shows the undeveloped Buffalo ship canal, which linked directly to the Buffalo River. This is a defining feature of the First Ward during the 1830s and 1840s. Using figure 3, this shows the development of the same area but now labeled with several grain elevators, which represents the importance of the grain elevator in the First Ward during this time.
Buffalo, their homes were swept away or destroyed due to floods with periodic storms from Lake Erie. If the structures were not washed away from rising waters, they became susceptible to illness and disease due to the lack of drainage. It was not until the 1860s when proper sewers were installed, and with the First Ward being at a lower level than other parts of the city, waste and sewage drained into the streets of the First Ward before reaching the Buffalo River. Yet again in 1849, Buffalo fell victim to another outbreak of Cholera, and the First Ward and the Irish were hit the hardest amongst other areas of the city simply because of the poor living arrangements and close quarters. Not only were the Irish facing the difficulties of establishing a homestead in Buffalo, but they were also faced with the plight of illness and disease.

Alongside the plethora of wooden shanty houses, an Irish immigrant could find shelter in the shape of a boardinghouse within the First Ward. While not initially the ideal home for an Irishman, the prevalence of boardinghouses rose in 1844. In October of 1844, Buffalo experienced a particularly devastating storm or seiche known as the “Lake Storm”, which led to a significant amount of damage and destroyed a large number of Irish homes in the First Ward, and also led to several deaths. With such devastation that had taken place, the seiche of 1844 underscored the need for more secure and stable housing for the population of the First Ward. While others built their homes again with miscellaneous remains of their previous dwellings and driftwood, others opted for the boardinghouses.

The Boardinghouse is an important aspect of understanding the Buffalo Irish’s socio-economic status among the population. Many different aspects of the boardinghouses reflected Irish culture in Buffalo, such as the saloons present. Saloons acted as a replacement for the
traditional dining areas and provided the social interactions attractive to the ethnic group. The boardinghouses also provided a better living option for the Irish due to their improved conditions compared to that of a wooden shanty house. Instead of suffering in small, poorly built shacks, the boardinghouses provided a more stable housing option, which led to more Irish opting for this living arrangement.

This was particularly apparent for younger Irish laboring males. By 1855, 55 percent of the unmarried Irish male population had taken up residence in a boardinghouse. On the other hand, Irish women had lodged with their families, resulting in 21 percent of Irish women living in boardinghouses by the same year. Unlike the separated shanty homes throughout the First Ward, these boardinghouses also provided an alternative to a family life. Eventually, those living in boardinghouses would establish relationships amongst one another and with the owner of the boardinghouse, which reflected a more traditional family system.

In addition to the boardinghouses, the Irish had eventually made advancements in their living status in the mid-1850s. According to the 1855 New York State Manuscript Census, the First Ward Irish in Buffalo had begun to change the materials used to build their homes. This is especially significant for two main reasons. First, with different materials, such as log, framework, or brick, the Irish were able to withstand environmental hardships that had initially impacted their homestead years prior. Second, and more importantly, these different materials

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49 Ibid. p. 82.
50 Ibid.

The presence of the boardinghouse also aided in the eventual health and sanitation movement that would combat the lack of proper sanitation and waste disposal. This was done through the head of the boardinghouse regulating waste disposal and later regulations established in the city.
used represented an advancement of the Irish in society. For example, in Buffalo during 1855, the clearest sign of wealth was a home built of stone or brick. Initially the Irish were known for their shanty homes, made of simple wood without much support. However, as time moved on and the Irish were able to attain slightly more wealth, they were able to build up their homes. While they were unable to afford the stability of brick, or framework, which was also referred to as “plank” in the 1855 census, homes made of more sturdy wood grew in the 1850s and onward.

The information used in Figure 5, “Types of Dwellings in Buffalo, NY 1855” comes directly from the Manuscript Census. The data listed provides insight into the total number of dwellings in each Ward where the Irish had a significant amount of homes. In addition, one can note that the two most expensive building materials, Stone and Log were not present in any Irish dominant Ward. A random 5% sample of the Manuscript Census in each of the three graphs coincide with the model of Coffey and Noble and other social scientific samples. However, Coffey and Noble
Based on the information gathered to construct figure 5, there are specific aspects of each housing type that reflect different aspects of the Irish in these respective wards in Buffalo. First, the blue columns in the chart represent the First Ward and the number of dwellings present in the ward and the building materials used to construct each home. For example, in the First Ward, brick-built homes are only a small percentage compared to the other two materials. Out of the 1,090 dwellings, only about 10 percent of the homes in the First Ward were brick. Meanwhile, the second largest percentage comes from the number of “Frame” style houses present in the First Ward. Similar to the “plank” style homes, frame housing is a 2 x 4 framework that requires more skill and is more substantial in poor weather. These dwellings were covered with horizontal siding on the exterior, and an interior made of lath and plaster. While similar, plank housing was made of 2 x 8 or 2 x 10 inch thick planks, ranging from 7 or 8 feet in length, which were quickly set vertically next to one another between the bottom horizontal sill and upper horizontal beam. These dwellings were far more stable homes, using materials such as sawed timber, which added to the stability and were constructed at a quick pace. For the purposes of this study plank houses have been added to framed houses since plank houses were substantially constructed, especially compared with shanties and other loosely constructed housing. Out of the total number of dwellings in the First Ward, the “Frame” style homes consisted of slightly over 43% of all homes. Lastly, in the First Ward, “shanty” style homes were most prevalent. These shanty houses were so prevalent in the First Ward due to how cheap they were to construct do not break down this information by specific wards and instead establish an average amount of one ethnic group. This chart provides a point of reference for the differences existing in the three wards with highest Irish percentage of population in Buffalo during 1855.

\[51\] Coffey and Noble. p. 4.
and live in. However, these homes were also very poorly built—made of cheap wood or scrap pieces that the inhabitants were able to obtain. It is also important to note that the large number (over 45 percent) of houses as shanties indicated the limited resources or wealth of the Irish in the First Ward, and the precarious life these people led when faced with occasional storms or poor drainage. This is why such a large number are present in this Ward and consisted of over 45 percent of all dwellings in the First Ward.

Meanwhile, the Third Ward, as discussed, housed more Irish with a wider array of skills, which is reflected in their housing arrangements. Even though the Third Ward had a smaller number of brick dwellings compared to the First Ward, the percentage is greater due to the smaller number of Irish dwellings in the Third Ward to begin with. Over 13 percent of all houses in the Third Ward were made of brick. In addition, frame or plank style housing was far more prevalent because the more skilled or better off Irish in the Third Ward also had access to better resources compared to their First Ward counterparts. Over 86 percent of all housing in the Third Ward was a frame house, made of the previously mentioned materials which provided a better living arrangement. This also reflected their social status and greater resources. It is also obvious that throughout the Third Ward, no shanty style homes were recorded in the 1855 Manuscript Census, furthering the idea that the Third Ward Irish were far more skilled and had more resources than their counterparts in other Wards.52 Finally, as reflected in Figures 2, 3, and 4, the Third Ward, and to a lesser extent the Eighth Ward, had higher elevations than the First Ward, which also reflects on the relative poverty of the First Ward inhabitants.

Lastly, the Eighth Ward, while smaller in population and total number of dwellings still had a recognized Irish presence. The Eighth Ward also presented some unique living

52 Ibid. p. 5.
arrangements and percentages compared to the previous two. While the Eighth Ward was sandwiched in between Lake Erie and the Erie Canal, it thus contained a number of boat or ship building or rigging enterprises that serviced the Lake and Canal traffic. With these differing levels of skill throughout the Eighth Ward, the varied styles of housing reflect this. That is why about 47 percent of the 632 dwellings in the Eighth Ward were frame style housing, showing that these Irish did have access to a few more resources compared to the First, but not the Third. Meanwhile, the Eighth did have a good number of shanty style houses; it was far less than the First Ward, with only 15 percent of all housing being shanty. Lastly, the remaining 38 percent were brick built homes, which indicates skilled craftsmen in the ship construction trade, or others who had resources and were settling on the lower west side.\(^{53}\)

Another hardship present for the Irish was surprisingly internal through the First Ward. While many Irish immigrants made their way to that area and settled in such proximity to one another and had even worked alongside their neighbors, there was a distinct lack of comradery present in the First Ward. By 1836, the city of Buffalo was already broken into five wards, which led to social division and classification from its residents.

Aside from the growing neighborhoods in the First Ward and Eighth Ward, there were also significant amounts of Irish choosing to settle to the north and a bit east of the First Ward in what would become Wards 2 and 3. Among the 13 Wards listed in the 1855 New York State Manuscript Census, the Third Ward had the third highest Irish population in Buffalo at 31.82 percent, behind the Eighth and the First Wards, where their population of Irish were over 43 percent.\(^{54}\) In their article, “Mid-Nineteenth Century Housing,” Coffey and Noble also mention

\(^{53}\) Ibid. p. 15.

\(^{54}\) New York State Manuscript Census, 1855.
the Third Ward as acting as a “buffer zone” between the Irish settlements and German settlements.  

This presented a unique internal hardship amongst the Irish immigrant populace wherein a type of rivalry would grow between those living in the First Ward and those living in the Third. The origins of the rivalry can be attributed to the different social statuses at play. Unlike the First Ward Irish, those in the Third Ward were far better off on the socio-economic ladder. While most Irish immigrants were unskilled and lacked an adequate income to provide for stability in basic food needs, those in the Third Ward were better off as a rule. Instead, these Irish immigrants living in the Third Ward were many times made up of semi-skilled or skilled workers who were able to afford life outside of the First Ward and away from the difficulties of the waterfront.

For example, a surprising point Gerber brings up is that common semi-skilled or skilled occupation present in the Third Ward, and parts of the Eighth, were those participating in ship carpentry and blacksmithing. These two occupations were especially prevalent and even had higher percentages of Irish employed in those fields compared to other semi-skilled or skilled occupations. Gerber also mentions in his book that the Irish residing further away from the waterfront, like those in the Third Ward, represented a higher standard of life. In addition, he mentions how those Irish in the Third Ward had been present in Buffalo longer than their counterparts in the First Ward. This in turn led to the Third Ward Irish having a better understanding of American life, and more time to accumulate more wealth, which aided in their

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55 Coffey, Noble. p. 4.
56 Ibid. Page 23.
57 Gerber. p. 143.
58 Ibid. p. 123
higher standard of living. However, this Third Ward standard was still lower than other immigrant groups, such as the Germans.\footnote{Ibid. p. 144.}

These three wards are prime examples of the differing experiences the Irish faced while in Buffalo. Just as their places of settlement differed with areas, the First Ward Irish and their occupations were far more unskilled compared to the Third Ward Irish. Coming to Buffalo, most of the Irish were unskilled tenant farmers who had little opportunity to become socially mobile. This fact brings into consideration Figure 6, a bar chart showing the division of labor present in the predominately Irish Wards in Buffalo. As one can see in the legend of the chart, the largest
segment of the First Ward Irish were unskilled laborers. On the other hand, the Third Ward contained a much higher percentage of higher skilled Irish.

This data for the three wards are approximate, in large part because of the greater percentages of unskilled labor in the First and Eighth Wards, but also because of the poor census records. In many cases a “blank” space in the Manuscript census sheet indicated that the head of the household did not even have a regular unskilled job. Gerber solidifies this fact in his study by stating how in the 1855 Manuscript Census, a sample was taken by historian Mary Mattis, who found that out of a 5 percent sample of the entire Irish populace, 46 percent could state no regular occupation. In addition, another 20 percent stated they were general outdoor laborers who were also unskilled, while the much smaller percentages made up a minority of skilled Irish, of which resided in the third ward.\textsuperscript{60}

Throughout the three represented Wards, there were still examples of Irish with the skills necessary to occupy those high-level positions. One position that the skilled Irish were able to participate in was that of a Blacksmith, especially in Wards 1 and 8, because they were fitting out ships and boats due to their location on the harbor or near the water. Meanwhile, in Ward 3, as stated previously, these Irish were far more skilled than their counterparts. This is where more Irish Americans with clerical work and white-collar occupations resided, further away from those with manual labor type occupations.\textsuperscript{61}

The common employment for most of these immigrants were as grain scoopers in the grain elevators sprawling along the waterfront. This occupation was consistent amongst the Irish males throughout the 1840s and into the proceeding decades. The average profile of an Irish

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid. pp. 124 – 125.
\textsuperscript{61} Coffey and Noble. p. 2 – 4.
grain scooper was a young man, normally in their twenties or thirties, and mostly single. Furthermore, these grain scoopers were subjected to long, strenuous, hours with very low pay. It was not an uncommon practice among the grain elevator owners to establish an already low pay to non-Irish laborers only to bring on Irish grain scoopers for an even lower wage.\textsuperscript{62}

Aside from their work as grain scoopers in the grain elevators, the Irish also participated in other fields of labor. As prominent as the Erie Canal was in Buffalo, the 1840s brought on a new enterprise in the growing railroad industry.\textsuperscript{63} Initially, the government in Buffalo attempted to quell the growth of the railroad industry in the city, but the only way for advancement in the industrial landscape was to adapt. By 1853, railroad companies had left their mark and had established three railways throughout the First Ward along the northern border by Exchange Street. These companies included the Buffalo & Rochester line, Buffalo & State line, and the Buffalo & New York City line. Compared to the waterfront and boat shipments, the railroads were far more effective and took less time to transport goods. In 1855, railroad shipments surpassed the amount of shipments via boat by double the amount exported. With the introduction of these railroads, new job opportunities were presented to Buffalo residents, especially for the Irish in the First Ward. Jobs ranged from laying down tracks to other unskilled construction; they became available in the early days of railroad construction, but eventually more skilled positions, such as engineers, conductors, switchmen, and yard managers were created as well.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{62} Jenkins. “In the Shadow of a Grain Elevator…” p. 27.
\textsuperscript{63} Gerber. p. 54.
\textsuperscript{64} Bohen. p.28.
Lastly, it is important to acknowledge the amount of time the Irish had been residing in Buffalo, New York up until 1855, based on the manuscript census. The chart above is a data sample of all Irish heads of households residing in the three wards (1, 3, and 8) to give a better understanding of general trends relating to the length of residence for the Irish. The main takeaway from this information listed in the manuscript census and this chart is that most of the Irish in Buffalo by 1855 had not been in the city for long period of time. This is especially true among the Irish in the First Ward, which is represented with the blue bars in the chart. Only 15 percent of the Irish residing in the First Ward had been in the area for over 10 years. Meanwhile, most Irish in the Third Ward had been in Buffalo for well over 10 years, with some residents even living there over 20 years. This statistic further reflects their access to resources and percentages in semi-skilled or skilled labor. Among the Eighth Ward Irish we see a slightly
diverse set of data compared to the First and Third. Instead, the Eighth Ward Irish were sporadic in their length in residence. This can be attributed to the unique placement of the Eighth Ward, being close enough to the waterfront to aid those unskilled Irish in need of a low skill level occupation, while also having the resources to accommodate the skilled Irish.

At this point, one may ask why it is important to acknowledge the amount of time the Irish had resided in Buffalo by 1855. First and foremost, the amount of time present in the city correlates with the previous data listed in the other tables. For example, if members of an Irish family had not been present in Buffalo for longer than 2 to 4 years, they were more likely to reside in the First and Eighth Wards in a shanty style home. Meanwhile, those Irish who had been present in Buffalo for longer periods of time, especially 9 years or longer, they were more likely to be the Irish who possessed a wider array of skills, thus placing them in the Third Ward with better living conditions away from the waterfront.

It is also important to note, while the Irish in the Third Ward were more likely to have higher skills, the Irish in the First and Eighth Wards were able to gain some advances in the labor market as well. This took the shape of job security, wherein the longer they worked and lived in a specific area, the greater the job security was. In turn, this job security had led to an increase in mobility, allowing some Irish to move out of the First Ward, one of the poorer sections of the city, and travel into the Eighth Ward, which was not as poverty ridden.65

The Third Ward, and even parts of the Second Ward, were home to some of these high paying jobs that were more readily open to the Irish residing in the Third Ward. Looking back to the “Years of Residence” chart, the small percentage of the 10 or more-year residencies, were strictly in the Third Ward, reaching up to 85 percent of the Irish populace in that ward. With this

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65 Gerber. p. 144.
in mind, it is important to understand that the longer the Irish resided in Buffalo, greater opportunities presented themselves. For example, the Irish who had resided for a longer period of time in the city had an easier time becoming active in of the political or economic sphere in Buffalo. For example, by 1858, enough capital had been accumulated by this group of Irish that an Emigrant Savings Bank had opened, providing loans to other Irish families, which in turn led to more Irish moving out of poverty and into more suitable homes. In addition to this, the eight officers of the Catholic Institute had, on average been in Buffalo for 18 years. This group was able to provide assistance to the Irish by developing a familiarity with American life and personal roots due to their prominence in the few stable Irish institutes in the city.  

Comparing the Irish experiences in the labor market to other ethnic groups in Buffalo and other areas, such as New York City, it is clear the struggles present in Irish immigrant society were nowhere near easy to bear. Groups such as the Germans and British immigrating to the United States and in New York did not face as many struggles when it came to the ability to rise through the ranks of society. The Germans and British consisted of more skilled immigrants, which provided them with better occupations, and in turn, more income and wealth. Meanwhile, the Irish in Buffalo continued to face hardship after hardship in the economic landscape, often unable to better their placement and left to struggle. Buffalo was not initially the place of prosperity for a migrant minority, which lacked the necessary skills to aid their placement in society. The Irish immigrant working class was synonymous with being poor and disease ridden, which in turn led to countless forms of social discrimination from other groups in Buffalo throughout the 1800s.

66 Ibid.
67 Meagher. "The Famine Years." p.82.
Chapter 3: Irish Interactions in Buffalo’s Communities

The Irish community in Buffalo, New York experienced different hardships which ranged from aspects outside of their control, such as the elemental plights of the city, their poor living conditions, and ethnic discrimination from other groups amongst the general population. According to Gerber, this discrimination had been passed on by the British who perpetuated their negative experiences and impressions of the Irish to Americans before the wave of Irish arrived in the United States in the 1840s. Secondly, aspects such as a lack of organization also persisted amongst the Irish that was not remedied until the introduction of Bishop John Timon and other leaders. Early Irish immigrants in the 1820s through the 1830s had faced these struggles upon their arrival and eventual settlement throughout the United States. However, these struggles had become more apparent amongst the famine-era immigrants in the mid-1840s coming into Buffalo. One unique struggle for the famine-era immigrants was the practice of serial migration, wherein they took up temporary residence in an area, earned money through labor, and eventually move to a better area. This made developing a community difficult considering the consistent moving of Irish out of First Ward. On the other hand, due to the other listed hardships, the ability to earn enough to leave the First Ward was also difficult.

Throughout the contents of this study, discrimination towards the Irish had been a consistent factor which halted their advance in Buffalo society. One must ask, why did the Irish receive such harsh social discrimination from most of the native-born Americans? The significant increase in the Irish population is what led to such hostilities in the first place, and the growing presence of the Irish in American workplaces only added to the nativist mindset. While

68 Gerber, p. 122
the Irish were able to solidify their place in Buffalo’s labor market, as described in Chapter 2, their presence, except perhaps for businessmen who benefitted from their ability to pay the Irish lower wages, was far from welcomed. While the Irish immigrating to Buffalo had the advantage of knowing the English language, they still faced harsh discrimination. According to Gerber, the large majority of Irish had “…few marketable skills, little education, and very little money. Substantial social disorganization – poverty, crime, disease, alcoholism, and family dissolution – accompanied their resettlement in America.” Gerber also provides insight into the growing Anti-Irish sentiment throughout the United States in his study. The “No Irish Need Apply” or “NINA” had been seen even in the 1840s and did have a presence in Buffalo. However Gerber states that this “‘NINA’ syndrome” was far more common along the eastern seaboard and was not as prevalent in Buffalo.\(^\text{69}\) This phenomenon resulted from the fact that the Irish were still able to participate in the labor market in Buffalo due to the need for so many unskilled laborers.

During the latter half of the 1800s, anti-immigrant sentiment swept across the United States, and this mindset was present throughout Buffalo’s native-born population. With the massive influx of Irish immigrants entering the United States because of the Great Famine beginning in 1845 with the exodus of hundreds of thousands Irish over the course of the next decade, many states were unsure as to how to manage effectively this staggering increase in population. Upon their arrival, the Irish were targeted by the nativist populace in the United States. The sight of ships filled to the brim with shambling Irish men, women and children was not appealing; the ships initially transporting them were often referred to as “coffin-ships” by Americans, because so many of the Irish passengers had died on the trip across the Atlantic. As stated in prior chapters, the Irish, right off the boats through the time of their settlement, were

\(^{69}\) Ibid. p. 125.
viewed poorly. The general opinion surrounding Americans was that these Irish immigrants were far from desired and seen as the undesired remains sent to their lands by the British, who were ruling over the Irish at the time. The problems only grew for Irish immigrants during the 1840s and 1850s because of the growing resentment. In Buffalo, the Irish often became stranded in cities because of poverty, disease or even death. Time and again the Irish fell victim to robberies in route, wherein their remaining possessions vanished shortly after their departure.\(^70\) With this anti-Irish sentiment growing amongst the American populace, the goal of a better life in a prosperous society seemed to have died on arrival.

Throughout the 1840s, Anti-Immigrant sentiment spread through both Buffalo and the United States as a whole. Verbal harassment was used to attack the Irish and aided in their placement on the social ladder, barely above the then enslaved blacks. Eventually, in 1849, New York City became the home to a growing organization known as the Order of the Star-Spangled Banner. A few years later during the 1850s, the Order became a more recognized political party by the name of the Know-Nothing Party.\(^71\) The party was also able to grow thanks in part to the passing of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854. The act brought on a heated debate and conflicts amongst pro-slavery and anti-slavery advocates for obvious reasons, and the Know-Nothings often leaned towards the pro-slavery mindset, although some members were on the opposite side of the spectrum.

This party became particularly popular among nativist Americans with the group’s ideals established around anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic sentiments, both of which were used to target the Irish throughout the country. By 1845, the Know-Nothing Party had established itself

\(^70\) Ibid. Pg. 115.
in the United States political sphere. Buffalo was also home to a strong presence of the Know-
Nothing party, which was a hard blow to the growing Irish populace throughout the city. As
time moved on, the Know-Nothings grew in power and continued in their effort to suppress the
immigrant presence in Buffalo, just as it had throughout the United States. By 1856 the party
exploded in support by the nativist majority and the mindset of strictly voting for “…any
man…unless he were [sic] an American citizen, born of Protestant parents and not united in
marriage to a Roman Catholic.” Anti-Immigrant sentiment had grown throughout Buffalo’s
native population and had rotted itself into the Know-Nothing Party and later the Republican
Party as well.

In addition, there were countless instances of physical conflict throughout the United
States wherein one group and the Irish had battled in streets causing massive riots. For example,
one instance of this took place in Philadelphia in 1844, known as the Bible Riots of 1844,
nativists had destroyed immigrant homes and set churches ablaze, which led to the death of
several involved. Meanwhile, Buffalo had its own instances of civil unrest and nativists
targeting immigrants through both physical and non-physical attacks. One Buffalo newspaper of
the era, the Commercial Advertiser, perpetuated the anti-Irish sentiment in many of their
editorial articles. One such article wrote, “…men who infallibly chose a location in a swamp,
and live in a shanty…these fellows are hewers of wood and drawers of water…simply because
they are drunken wretches, without the ambition or the brains to better their conditions.”

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73 Bohen. p. 41.
74 Quoted in Bohen. pp. 41 – 2.
Articles such as this also existed in other newspapers and continued to attack the dwellings of the Irish, alongside their social acts of binge drinking among other examples. On July 14th, 1854, tensions grew fierce between nativists and the Irish in Buffalo along Main Street. That evening, following several prior nights of preaching at Main Street by Catholic preachers, a riot broke out between the groups during which “seven or eight Irishmen’s heads were broken, but no one was killed. Five Irishmen were arrested and fined $25 each.” It is important to note that the article published by the New York Times did not mention any arrests of any Buffalo nativists. This may represent the Anti-Immigrant sentiment present in Buffalo society considering that only Irish were arrested due to the conflict.

Anti-Immigrant news editorials persisted throughout the 1850s, some lasting through the decade and continuing into the latter half of the 1800s. One editorial article was published in the Buffalo Daily Republic, which ran from 1848 through 1861. The article, published in 1858, centered on the debate of political alignments of different groups and the Anti-Immigrant sentiment throughout the country. For example, the editorial quoted one General Dearborn of Tennessee who stated, “Unless we stop immigration, we can’t preserve the liberty of our country. If it continues, the time will come when we will have to rise in arms and massacre the foreigners or make them our slaves.” Based on articles such as these that directly focused on the Anti-Immigrant sentiment, or made examples of how widespread the mindset had become, it is clear that the Irish in Buffalo could do little to hide from a nativist spotlight.

Among the growing number of Anti-Irish newspaper articles and writings, there was also a presence of Anti-Irish political cartoons that originated in the mid-1800s and continued through

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76 This quote is from the Editor of the Morning Express edition of The Buffalo Daily Republic, August 20th, 1858, page unknown.
the turn of the century. One common theme throughout these cartoons during the mid to latter half of the 1800s was to depict the Irish as inferior to a larger entity. For example, British illustrator John Leech drew one such piece for the British publication, *Punch*, titled “The British Lion and the Irish Monkey”, which can be seen in Figure 8, and depicts the Irish as being far inferior to their British rulers. It is also important to note in Leech’s illustration that the British lion does not have a weapon, which acted as a point to support their self-proclaimed superiority. The crown on the British lion evidently signified, while the monkey’s jester attire represented a traffic-comedic figure.

![The British Lion and Irish Monkey Cartoon](image)

*Figure 8: The British Lion and Irish Monkey Cartoon*

While not an American nativist creation, Leech’s work in *Punch* appeared around the same time as others in the United States and added to the contempt towards the Irish. Just as the Know-Nothing party grew to power in the 1850s, so too did their contributions of Anti-Immigrant political cartoons. These cartoons perpetuated not only the idea of Irish inferiority,
but they also consistently portrayed the Irish at the level of ape-men.\textsuperscript{77} Other examples drew upon the presence of the drunken nature of Irish immigrants, and the nativists condemning such actions. One such cartoon depicted Irish and German immigrants interfering with an election by stealing a ballot box with the Irishman depicted as a man in a barrel with “Irish Whiskey” while the German man’s barrel was labeled with “Lager Bier.”\textsuperscript{78}

![Figure 9](image)

However, the stereotypes of drunkenness present another aspect of anti-Irish sentiment present in Buffalo. Even as offhand knowledge, the Irish were known to be heavy drinkers, and this characterization was ingrained deep into their culture in both Ireland and in the United


Figure 8: John Leech's "The British Lion and the Irish Monkey" Punch, a British magazine of political comedy, 8 April 1848.

\textsuperscript{78} Figure 9: "['Irish Whiskey and Lager Bier']." The Civil War Era. \url{http://projects.leadr.msu.edu/civilwarera/items/show/63}. 
States. While the Germans also had a reputation for their drinking, during the mid-1800s it was clear among the two groups who had more of a problem. Again, in figure 9, the two groups are labeled with the drink most often associated with their respective ethnic groups. The Germans chose to drink lager beer, which was served warm and in the presence of family or friends. Compare this to the Irish, who were seen drinking stronger and more potent beverages, such as whiskey; again it is clear which style of drinking led to public conflicts throughout society. These violent confrontations were often brought on by the Irish, especially against the Germans.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Gerber. p. 133.
Another example of an anti-Irish immigrant cartoon is depicted in John Leech’s *Punch* cartoon, in Figure 10. “The Greedy Boy who cried for the Moon” depicts Ireland as the crying child while the mother is meant to be the British. According to author, Martin Forker, the Irish Greedy Boy is meant to look overfed to reflect overindulgence, while the British mother keeps him in her grasp to reflect superiority. Forker prefaces this by providing insight into the political unrest among the native Irish under British rule. During the mid-1840s, the unrest was so prevalent among the Irish that the British Prime Minister of that era, Robert Peel, made the

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Forker. p. 61.

Figure 10: John Leech’s “The Greedy Boy who Cried for the Moon” *Punch*, May, 24, 1854.
decision to increase the financial assistance for Catholic trainings in Maynooth, Ireland. This in turn led to increased discord among Englishmen who continued to target the Irish.\textsuperscript{81} Considering the multitude of anti-Irish cartoons, it is clear that the Irish faced difficulties while adjusting to American societies based on the existing malice targeting them at home and abroad.

The Irish populace’s religious beliefs were the second reason for the blatant discrimination that affected them. The United States religious landscape was not one that fit the Irish well. In their homeland and as they migrated to the United States and settled in Buffalo, the Irish believed in the Roman Catholic faith, while most of Buffalo’s native populace were Protestant.\textsuperscript{82} This Protestant majority originated due to the ethnic makeup of what can be called a native Buffalonian. As briefly mentioned, Buffalo’s incorporation as a city and later regional breakup is attributed to the founders of the city coming from Episcopalian or Presbyterian backgrounds from New England.\textsuperscript{83} In turn, the Protestant presence is clear due to the ethnic link of Buffalo’s nativists to their British predecessors. During the 1850s in Buffalo, the Protestant elite viewed the Irish Catholics as a threat to their way of life. As Bishop Timon spoke out against the Anti-Catholic religious discrimination, the Protestant majority believed he was critical of the King James Bible, furthering the elite’s point of view.\textsuperscript{84}

The large Protestant elite in Buffalo had also used different social events or political movements to their advantage while attempting to subjugate the Irish. For example, in the mid-

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
This aid was criticized because it was provided to the Catholics over the dominant Anglican Church in England.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{84} Mark Goldman. \textit{High Hopes before the Fall: The Rise and Decline of Buffalo, New York}. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983. p. 120.
1800s, the Temperance movement had revitalized and spread throughout the United States. In Buffalo, during the 1840s specifically, different temperance groups began to establish themselves. Initially the movement did originate due to the increase in alcohol use, which resulted in an increase of alcohol abuse related crimes. However, with such a movement taking place country wide, the Protestant elite in Buffalo saw an opportunity. While not an outright attack on the Irish, the elite were able to target them due to the large presence of bars or taverns throughout Buffalo that the Irish frequented. It was likely that the Irish viewed the temperance movement in Buffalo as an attack on their people.  

In addition to this, the Irish in Wards 1 and 8 were able to become more adept to the political landscape in Buffalo. This was thanks in part due to their prior knowledge of English and habits of “political cooperation” to give themselves a better stance in the political sphere, which had provided the Irish with a disproportionate amount of political power as time went on. However, this overwhelming presence at the polls in the First and Eighth Wards led to conflicts among the Irish and other ethnic groups. However, the Irish Catholic leadership viewed these discriminatory acts targeting their people as socially wrong and intolerable, but little was done to call off these violent conflicts considering how engrained they were in Irish culture.

Anti-Irish sentiment throughout the United States was prominent throughout the mid-1800s and it was just as apparent in Buffalo. This discrimination and mindset persisted throughout the city and created a harsh obstacle for the Irish to overcome. With most of Buffalo’s native populace following the Protestant faith, the Irish became easy targets because of

86 Gerber. p. 135.
their religious beliefs. In addition to this, the Irish population’s placement on the social ladder led to further discrimination brought on by nativist Buffalonians. Meanwhile, the establishment and growth of the Know-Nothing party, and the beginning of anti-Irish political cartoons both aided in the growth of societal discrimination targeting the Irish. Eventually, the Irish were able to find some sort of relief and aid in their plights with the introduction of key figures and leaders, most importantly, Bishop John Timon.
Chapter 4: Bishop Timon’s Leadership to Mobility

The life of an average Irish immigrant in Buffalo, New York was clearly not one of prosperity and equality. There is plenty of documentation showing that the average immigrant’s life was filled with hardships. The culture of the Irish immigrants during the mid-1800s did little to aid their socio-economic status, and their placement in society had solidified for some time. However, there were a handful of individuals who acted as leaders among the Irish in Buffalo who contributed greatly to their fortunes and aided them in their rise through the social structure of the city. One such individual who led the charge for the improvement of the Irish in Buffalo was the famous Bishop Timon. He was instrumental in initiating and encouraging many forms of aid in the shape of groups of other individuals or institutions, which helped the Irish Catholic community.

It is important to emphasize the importance of Bishop Timon considering the impact he left on Buffalo during the mid-1800s. He was born on February 12th, 1797, in Conewago, Pennsylvania, where his parents, James Timon and Margaret Leddy were Irish natives. James and Margaret were devout Christians and raised their children with their Catholic religion at the forefront, with the concepts of virtue and charity being a priority above all else. John’s family consisted of two brothers by the name of James and Owen and seven sisters named Ellen, Rose, Mary, Eliza, Ann, Agatha, and Catherine. Unfortunately, his older brother James died early in their lives, while his other siblings continued their lives and married. Historians often focus on John Timon’s life as a Bishop, but it is be appropriate to elaborate further on his youth and understand how his parents’ religious teachings influenced his later life.
His father, James, was an incredibly dedicated Christian and a prideful Irishman throughout his life. Just as many Irish had emigrated out of their homeland, James left Ireland to escape the harsh conditions, previously described in chapter 2, in 1802. It is also important to note James’s charitable nature, which the parents taught John at an early age, and greatly influenced his later actions. In author Charles George Deuther’s biography, he cites an encounter between a clergyman and James, wherein James had given the unknowing clergyman a check for $100, which at the time was no small sum. This further reflects the Timon family and their charitable nature and how steadfast James was with his charity.\textsuperscript{88}

Even though he was dedicated to his country, James had to travel to the United States and settled in Baltimore, Maryland. Unfortunately, life was not filled with economic fortune for James. His dry goods business took years to become established, in part owing to his son John who, acting on his father’s teachings of virtue and politeness, aided his father in securing customers due to the kind nature he was taught. As John grew into a young adult, James decided to move from Baltimore to Louisville, Kentucky. By the end of 1818, the two had reached their destination, and while their business venture succeeded to a degree, they were not satisfied, which led them to travel west to St. Louis, Missouri a year later. With experience in business, John’s skills of personal interaction among others began to grow and shine and was apparent to

his father. Instead of keeping his son focused on growing their business, James advocated and pushed John towards the world of religion.

In 1823, a financial panic plagued the United States and impacted the country to a devastating point. This panic did not spare James Timon, practically ruining his wealth as it did to many Americans at that time. At this point, John realized the fluidity of wealth and prosperity, which furthered his path toward the Christian religion. After a failed personal relationship, John denounced his worldly possessions in April, 1823 and enrolled as a seminary student at St. Mary’s of Barrens in Perryville, Missouri. While the panic continued to ravage the country, St. Mary’s continued their mission in supporting those in need and teaching the Christian religion. John dedicated his time to assisting the Barrens, studying philosophy and different ideologies, and took necessary time to reflect and meditate on his life, which was evidenced in his prayers and preaching. Throughout his time at the Barrens, John had assisted many people in need, which helped grow his already powerful charitable nature. In 1825, John entered the priesthood at the age of 28 and continued acting on his generous nature. As a priest, John had also acted as a professor in the Barrens and a missionary who traveled to nearby counties in Missouri.89 Although John was a devout Christian and open to aiding anyone he could, others had gone out of their way to verbally attack him. Even with these obstacles, John’s dedication to the church and God helped him to disregard rude acts and view them as a simple nuisance.

The Barrens in which John resided had been filled with several individuals of different religious views, especially Protestants. While these Protestants were often prejudiced and spoke out against their Christian counterparts, John and his religious colleagues would take time to

89 Ibid. Pg 31.
travel throughout the neighborhood near the Barrens and preach to children, their Catholic brethren and even Protestants. This is a prime example of John’s religious dedication and charitable nature, wherein he saw that any person was fit for religious teachings and aid. A year later in 1826, John participated in the construction of several churches, and baptisms, signifying his growth in aid to the religious community. As his work continued, the travels of John Timon allowed for many people to witness his acts of generosity.

By November of 1835, John had gained the title of “Visitor”, one who led the congregation of missions for the church. While hesitant, which is a trait he held during his religious journey, John accepted the position. Just as his transition throughout the levels of the church, as Visitor, John worked just as diligently. Taking on extensive travels to parts far and wide, John’s devotion to the church led him to New Orleans. Deuther detailed a specific occurrence of John’s wherein he aided in the conversion of a murderer to Christianity before his execution. Deuther quotes the murderer as follows.

“I lost all restraint over my passions; I followed one career of crime to another; I could do anything, so blunted and indifferent had my sense of modesty and conscience become, until, finally, I now find myself here in this dungeon, a victim for the scaffold. Now, must I expiate by a shameful death the bigotry that tore me from the influence of the only religion that could have restrained my passions, and have saved me.”

The murderer then broke into frantic sobbing over the deeds he committed. Again, people witnessed the power of faith at work brought on by John. In addition, John’s love for faith and his fellow man rose in the public’s eyes, even while prejudice from the Protestant majority permeated throughout the nation. By 1840, John was named the Prefect Apostolic of Texas following its acquisition of Independence from Mexico in 1836.

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91 Deuther, p. 58.
1836.\(^{92}\) As time moved on and his work aided in the future establishment of Texas as a part of the United States in 1845.

Five years later in 1847, John Timon, once a simple clerk in his father’s store, turned priest to Visitor, was given a letter. On September 5\(^{th}\) of that year, John was offered the office of Bishop of the new diocese of Buffalo, New York by Pope Pius IX.\(^{93}\) Again, his humility and hesitation arose when he was unsure to accept this gracious offer. John did accept the position and was named the first Bishop of the Buffalo Diocese. The Pope’s decision to name Timon as the first Bishop of Buffalo is often attributed to Timon’s kindhearted nature and dedication to his religion, which had been viewed as a necessity to aid the Irish and Buffalo. This can be seen with his initial arrival to Buffalo, wherein Timon had been offered a “fine carriage” to transport him into the city, but as an act to show solidarity with the lesser off Irish, he instead chose to walk.\(^{94}\) In October, John was consecrated as Bishop, which marked a turning point for both his life, and for the city of Buffalo.

Meanwhile, in Buffalo, the city’s Irish and other immigrant populations were facing obstacles in the form of discrimination and the growing debate of immigration throughout the country. For example, native Buffalo residents were consistently arguing over the U.S. government’s need to support immigrant groups, especially the hated Irish, over the native residents. In addition to this, the Protestants still outnumbered Catholics. Animosity and anti-immigrant sentiment raged throughout Buffalo in the social and

\(^{92}\) Ibid. Page 78.
\(^{94}\) Bohen. p. 43.
political sphere. This led to the Irish lacking proper representation and support throughout the different landscapes of life in Buffalo. For example, a prominent Catholic church in Buffalo, the St. Louis Church, was primarily led by the German Catholics. The Germans held a tight grip on the St. Louis Church, which had been established in 1829. From the 1830s and into the 1830s, the Germans dominated the Church and controlled all activities surrounding it. This was due to the fact that most German attendees were prosperous and respected businessmen.  

Luckily, Bishop Timon made it his mission to better his Irish brethren through several different ways. He took up residence at the corner of Ellicott and Batavia Street, in the heart of the Irish community between the First and Third Wards. On the other hand, religion was still his focus, and the first steps Bishop Timon took were to mend the divide present amongst the Catholic immigrants, not just the Irish. He also faced some pushback from the leadership of the local church, St. Louis Church on Main Street, which, as we have seen was primarily composed of German Catholics who stated that he did not have the right to be the owner of the church. The hostility between Bishop Timon and the German Catholics grew quickly due to Timon’s abrasive nature. With his new position, Bishop Timon threatened excommunication to community leaders. In addition, he threatened to halt all services the church provided, which in turn led to the German and French (German speaking Alsatian) Catholics resenting the Irish Bishop. This is most likely due to the social situations of the German and French compared to the Irish, who were in a much better and stable position in society while the Irish were struggling immensely. Eventually the Germans, feeling alienated, turned to legal measures to fight

against Bishop Timon’s policies, even reaching out to a Protestant lawyer, James Putnam. This act was especially surprising considering that, while Catholics, the Germans were still willing to hire a Protestant to aid in their conflict.\textsuperscript{96} This also fueled the anti-Catholic engine present in Buffalo along with the ever-apparent anti-Irish sentiment.

Bishop Timon also attempted to enhance the position of the priests in Buffalo, hoping to strengthen their authority and power and using that to reform the Irish people. Timon had recognized early on that the Irish in the First and Eighth Wards were predominantly unskilled, thus leading to a lack of leadership in those areas. Timon had worked closely with the priests and attempted to extend their authority to resemble that accorded to their counterparts in Ireland. For example, the priests encouraged the Irish to adopt different forms of American customs, such as their funeral proceedings. Unlike in Ireland, where funerals consisted of a large-scale march to lay someone to rest, Americans had used rented carriages to travel to the funerals, which represented a level of prestige. Bishop Timon viewed this as a needless expense and worked with the priests to abolish this custom.\textsuperscript{97} One large push that Timon and the priests had been successful in was their fight against binge drinking. One figure at the time, Father Theobold Matthew, took a nationalist perspective, arguing that the reason for the Irish’s subjugation originated with their excessive drinking, which led to the British and Anglo-Saxon Buffalo residents of that time taking advantage of them.\textsuperscript{98}

There had also been a handful of people who denounced the arrival of Bishop Timon in Buffalo and even his title of “Bishop”. For example, an article in Buffalo’s

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid. p. 81.
\textsuperscript{97} Gerber. p. 147.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid. 148.
Christian Advocate, one of many of the city’s religious newspapers of that time, presented a surprisingly negative stance against Bishop Timon. The author began his article questioning the title given to the Bishop, “His Lordship”, and further asked why such a title befitted him. The article stated,

“Such a title strikes our republican ears as being strangely out of place, and contrary to the spirit of our institutions. We have been accustomed for some time to read his “Lordship” Arch-Bishop Hughes; but never dreamed of having a titled gentleman at our very doors…We wonder how long it will be before the other despots of Europe will be following the example and dubbing their menials among us Dukes and Lords, and the like. It may do in Mexico…but in republican America it ought not be tolerated…”

Bishop Timon’s early work in Buffalo also dealt with the need for religious material for Catholic residents, which was severely lacking in the city. For example, in Buffalo there had been almost no services available to aid orphans, assist and visit the elderly in hospitals, establish proper schools, and to provide food for the populace. In the 1850s, the Irish were already facing struggles in maintaining their homes due to the environmental hardships. As previously mentioned, Lake Erie was especially difficult on the Irish in the First Ward with the seiche of 1844, taking the life of dozens. In addition, the Great Famine which extended from 1845 to 1850 alongside the cholera outbreak of 1849 and impacted the Irish, which added to the matters which Bishop Timon had to address. It was clear to Bishop Timon that the multitude of problems which needed to be addressed were far too much for just one man, regardless of his position and faith.

One year into his new position as Bishop in 1848, Timon brought another group into play that aided in the betterment of the Irish in the form of the Sisters of Charity.

99 “Have we a Lordship among us?” Buffalo Christian Advocate. September 1, 1853.
Originally formed in 1809 by Mrs. Elizabeth Bayley Seton, the group was the first indigenous Catholic women’s order in the United States.\textsuperscript{100} The group’s goal was “…to help the sick and needy and not concern themselves with a patient’s religion or irreligion.”\textsuperscript{101} This ideal matched Bishop Timon’s own point of view very well, which is a clear reason for his invitation in the first place. The Sisters of Charity arrived in Buffalo in June, 1848 and quickly began their work.\textsuperscript{102} Initially tasked with establishing a hospital, the group faced the same religious obstacles Bishop Timon had encountered, wherein the Protestant majority blocked the opening of the hospital. It was not until August, 1848 that the Sisters Hospital, was equipped with one hundred beds for patients.

The mission of the hospital is important to note considering that its words reflect heavily on the Sisters of Charity’s founding goal and Bishop Timon’s own perspective, which stated: “In admission of patients, no questions shall be made as to what the applicant believes, on matters of religion; and whenever a patient of any creed may wish to receive spiritual help from the minister of his religion, every facility shall be afforded for having his wish accomplished.”\textsuperscript{103}

While the Sisters Hospital was for public use, the predominant ethnicity of patients was Irish, consisting of 36.1% from 1848 – 1849, and 44.17% from 1855 – 1856.\textsuperscript{104} Another unique aspect of this hospital was its admission of children, while other hospitals during that period did not accept them.\textsuperscript{105} The hospital also had a close

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid. p. 19.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid. p. 44.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid. p. 45.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid. p. 165.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid. p. 47.
\end{flushright}
relationship with Bishop Timon, yet it was not exactly perfect. Conflict rose due to Bishop Timon’s holding the deed to the hospital, and his refusal to provide the deed to the Board of Trustees. While Bishop Timon attempted to hold the deed until the nearby lots were purchased for the hospital, this led to difficulties for the hospital’s operations and relations with the board. However, these conflicts can be considered minor in comparison to the good brought on by the hospital and the Sisters of Charity.

During the third outbreak of cholera in 1849, most of the native-born Buffalo population thought the poorer immigrants, and especially the Irish, caused the spread of the disease through the rest of Buffalo. The outbreak also produced a massive increase of patients for the hospital. Eventually the Sisters provided aid to the growing number of orphans due to the outbreak, since either their parents succumbed to the disease, or the children were abandoned at the hospital. Over time, the work done by the Sisters of Charity was recognized throughout the city as well as by the Irish. Sisters Hospital improved the health care system so much that Protestants sought the creation of similar services from non-Catholic institutions.

Aside from the sphere of health care, education was in dire need of assistance from Bishop Timon and the Sisters of Charity. The Irish populace in Buffalo was far from an educated lot, and Bishop Timon recognized this. In turn, one of his missions included the education of the Irish masses in hopes that education pursuits could aid their social status. Unfortunately, the schools in Buffalo were led by the Protestants and the Bishop believed that the Irish Catholic could lose their faith if they were to attend. To remedy this, Bishop Timon brought in another group to aid in his mission - The Sisters of...
Mercy. While a school had already been established by the Bishop, he lacked the necessary staff to keep it running smoothly. For this, he looked to the Sisters of Mercy. In February of 1858, the Sisters arrived in Buffalo and began their work at a soup kitchen. Later, the Sisters of Mercy worked in St. Joseph’s Academy and Our Lady of Mercy School, which led to a steady growth of students into the 1870s.

During the development of these schools, Bishop Timon was often outspoken regarding the public schooling system in Buffalo. A point of irritation for him was the taxes the Catholic minority had to pay toward the Protestant schools. The Bishop was quoted saying, “Were Catholics the majority in this country, and did they frame such a school system for Protestants, how awful would be the outcry? Did a Catholic majority tax a Protestant minority for the purchase of school libraries full of books that insult, ridicule, and malign Protestantism, how would not Protestants protest?” Bishop Timon could not believe the lengths to which the Irish Catholic minority were being taxed while they were left to live and suffer in squalor throughout the First Ward and other parts of Buffalo. These conditions helped bring on the need for schools dedicated to the Catholic populace of the city. Secondly, the speech from which the quote comes denounced the hardships the Irish had faced for their time in the United States, and asked the greater question of how the country could truly call itself free with such injustices being tolerated.

A third party was also recruited by the outspoken Bishop, that being Thomas D’Arcy McGee. A native born Irishman, McGee was a republican revolutionary.

106 Bohen. p. 45.
107 Deuther, p. 275.
involved in Ireland’s national liberation struggle in the early 1840s.\textsuperscript{108} During this time, McGee was known for his impatience for political change; instead he advocated forceful change among the Irish populace through insurrection. However, McGee was forced into exile by the British, made his way to the United States and first settled in Boston. From there, his tactics changed and he leaned more toward ultramontane conservatism, focusing more on emphasizing the power of the pope.\textsuperscript{109} This in turn caught the eye of Bishop Timon, who wished to bring McGee to Buffalo.

Bishop Timon viewed McGee as an essential piece in his mission considering McGee’s writings in newspapers that often spoke out against prejudice aimed at the Irish. His writings, which focused on the building up and betterment of the Irish working class in Buffalo, even gained him support in Ireland. After five years in 1852, Bishop Timon recruited McGee to ask him to edit an Irish American newspaper, the first paper titled “American Celt” and the second titled “Catholic Citizen.”\textsuperscript{110} Just as the Bishop viewed education as a powerful path for the Irish to take to battle persecution and poverty, McGee shared the perspective and was much more outspoken. In turn, McGee used his newspapers to advocate for educating the Irish masses in Buffalo. One aspect McGee emphasized was the need for Buffalo’s Irish to read and understand their heritage by reading more Irish literature and history.\textsuperscript{111} He also contributed to the establishment of

\textsuperscript{108} Gerber. p. 156.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid. p. 157.
\textsuperscript{110} Ultramontane conservatism is defined as the movement in the Roman Catholic Church which favors the centralized authority and influence of the pope as opposed to local independence.\textsuperscript{110} Bohen, p. 53.
\textsuperscript{111} Gerber. p. 158.
the Buffalo Catholic Institute, which provided educational lectures and books to aid in their educational crusade.

McGee’s time in Buffalo was short, and he left the city in 1853. According to David Gerber, McGee left Buffalo for more lucrative journalistic work in New York City. McGee’s contributions must be noted to comprehend fully the way in which education was used to assist the Irish. Unfortunately, Thomas D’Arcy McGee met his end at the hands of an assassin in 1868.

The work done by Bishop Timon, the Sisters of Charity, the Sisters of Mercy, and Thomas D’Arcy McGee had laid the groundwork for the Irish in Buffalo to become a more self-sufficient and productive group. Still, the many obstacles that society placed in front of the Irish did not disappear with the aid provided by those previously mentioned. However, the Irish found another way to better themselves and improve their status in society. On April 12th, 1861, the first shots of the American Civil War rang out at Fort Sumter in South Carolina. In response, many of the Irish in Buffalo put down their tools and took up a uniform and rifle.

**Buffalo’s Irish & the Civil War**

In the years leading toward the Civil War, Buffalo was prospering in the shipment, grain milling and lumber industries, in which the Irish had a large presence as laborers. With the spark of war, Buffalo continued to thrive as a city of commerce and industry, with the combination of grain and other shipments from the Midwest and a shift

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112 Gerber. p. 158.
113 Ibid. p. 55.
to war time manufacturing. On the other hand, Irish communities were hesitant regarding their actions and the Civil War. The Irish also had conflicting views toward the blacks, perceiving them as competitors for their jobs in the labor market. With this sense of uncertainty permeating throughout Irish society, they looked to their leader, Bishop Timon. While a racist mindset had existed in Buffalo and amongst the Irish, Bishop Timon had, on a few occasions, spoken out against slavery. However, it is important to note that Bishop Timon was not an abolitionist. Prior to the Civil War, Bishop Timon had supported the Missouri Compromise, which admitted Missouri to the Union as a slave state while having Maine be a free state. Although, with the attack at Fort Sumter taking place, the Bishop shifted his stance to be in full support of the Union.\textsuperscript{114}

With his stance established, Bishop Timon acted as a voice for the Irish and encouraged his people to support the war effort on the side of the Union. In turn, his goal was also to encourage the Irish to enlist in the war effort and support it at home. In one of his speeches directed at the Irish, Bishop Timon stated they must enlist for duty, stating:

“All our country it is our duty not to question, but to obey. So much the more holy will be the war, as it is not one of passion, but of duty. Those gallant soldiers do not rush to battle through enmity, hatred, or revenge. Ah, no! They love their brother of the South; they mourn over the necessity of arraying themselves in arms against their later beloved fellow-citizen…. This war, then, is not one of hatred or personal enmity; it is a way of duty, of lofty patriotism, of obedience to our country’s call…It is a war which if successful…will be of benefit to patriotic citizens...”\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid. p. 70.
Taking his words to heart, Buffalo’s Irish were inspired to act, flocking to join the Union army. In the summer of 1862, they had also spoken out for their desire and a need for a regiment of their own, to which the Bishop had given his full support. While a large number were still opposed to joining based on the prospect of economic competition with freed slaves, others showed great enthusiasm in joining the war effort. During the same summer, the 155th regiment was born, comprised entirely of Irish. A pride surged throughout the 155th, seeing the creation of the regiment as another way for their social status to change from what it was, and Bishop Timon thought the very same. In addition to the regiment, a larger coalition of Irish soldiers eventually formed.

An Irish immigrant and lawyer, John E. McMahon of Pearl Street, received notice that the 155th had been absorbed into a new regiment and was tasked with recruiting more soldiers. A recruitment office was quickly opened near the waterfront and over 570 men were recruited into the 155th. Following this recruitment, the Irish Legion led by General Michael Corcoran was born, which was also known as the “Green Flag Regiments” in April, 1861. This led to a reorganization of the regiment which separated several Buffalo Irish from each other. This act was unfortunate, because the common thought was that these men would fight side by side. Meanwhile, with the Irish entering the ranks of other Union soldiers, there was still an apparent anti-immigrant sentiment. This was more apparent considering the targets painted on the Irish due to their social status both

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117 Ibid.
in Buffalo and throughout the country. Even with the discrimination that plagued them at home following them to the army, the Irish were not dissuaded from participating.

In a way, the Civil War acted as a gateway for the Irish to integrate into American society. The Irish had a strong presence throughout Union regiments, even being the second-largest foreign group in the Union army, behind German Americans. In addition to the creation of the Irish Legion, views concerning the Irish began to shift, albeit slowly. Instead of an image of dirty, disease ridden immigrants, the Irish in the army were viewed accordingly, as soldiers. These Irish soldiers were a patriotic people filled with pride for their heritage and the Union. Throughout the Union forces, the Irish were very outspoken with their pride and support for the Union.

The Irish were also viewed as a strong people throughout their time in the Union forces. One individual exemplifying the Irish strength was one Thomas Francis Meagher, an Irish immigrant who led the Irish Legion. Meagher led his regiment into battle at the Battle of Bull Run, which has become famously known for its disastrous results for the Union. While the battle resulted in a retreat on the Union side, Meagher and his men were commended for their bravery in controlling the retreat, even earning recognition from President Abraham Lincoln.

The rich green flag, complemented by its red banners and golden harp over a row of shamrocks, became synonymous with the struggle the Irish went through for the sake of their nation’s mission and liberty, both in the United States and their homeland of

118 Ibid. p. 112.
119 Ibid. p. 116.
121 McMahon. p. 121.
Ireland. Through the harshest obstacle of all, the American Civil War represented the acceptance and assimilation the Irish so desperately needed during this era. Discrimination and hardships did not end after the Civil War, but they did ease. During the mid-1860s, the Irish in Buffalo, thanks largely in part to their brothers in arms who enlisted in the Union army, and who represented their people with pride, were able to make headway in becoming socially mobile.
Conclusion

Buffalo’s development had been quick, spurred on by the Erie Canal’s development of commerce, and then followed by industry. Along with these developments, the city had become a home to a plethora of immigrant groups who had settled within its borders. While some of these immigrant groups were able to adjust easily and become socially mobile, the Irish had a far more difficult time. These hardships ranged from elements of their history as refugees from a failed tenant system, and from situations outside of their control, such as the prejudices that native born Americans had against the impoverished immigrant group.

Initial hardships began with the Irish traveling to the United States due to the poor conditions present on the boats. These boats making their way across the ocean were filled to the absolute limit with migrants, leaving little room to keep themselves comfortable. These close quarters led to further hardships in the form of illnesses. Mortality rates skyrocketed among migrants, which is what led to the boats earning the nickname of “coffin ship” considering the number of corpses either on board or the number of corpses that had to be removed from the vessel during their travels. Upon arrival, the Irish were beaten down from the voyage to their new home and only had the tattered clothes on their back. Meanwhile, as they exited the boats, it was clear that they were very malnourished due to the lack of food present throughout the voyage.

As the Irish arrived to the United States in New York, they were immediately targeted by the native populace throughout the state and above that, the nation. Anti-immigrant sentiment had already been on the rise before the large influx of the Irish into American society. Meanwhile, different immigrant populations grew, as did this sentiment targeting them. Aside
from that, Anti-Irish sentiment spread from areas like Great Britain into the United States and thus into Buffalo, a process aided by the existence of political cartoons, that reflected popular opinions in Britain. From there, the Irish faced a lack of representation and leadership to withstand such a powerful opposition that took shape from native-born Buffalo residents. Eventually, Buffalo’s political realm became abhorrently Anti-Immigrant. The introduction of the Know-Nothing party and its assimilation into the larger Republic party allowed for the nativist, anti-immigrant, agenda to portray and try to critique the Irish as an inferior group of people in American society who were also impacting the sanctity of the nation and were largely viewed as a threat.

While there had been several forms of discrimination that had effected the Irish following their arrival and settlement in Buffalo, based on the evidence provided by this thesis, it is clear that the Irish were able to withstand this assault. This can initially be seen with in the shape of the Irish homestead in the three wards they were most predominant in, and later how these homesteads evolved alongside the ethnic group. With the intense analysis provided, it was shown that the Irish were able to establish a wide spread presence throughout the First, Third and Eighth Wards in Buffalo. As time passed, their homesteads had changed to reflect their economic status. This is again seen in the New York State Census of 1855 wherein the materials used to build their homes had been listed. In turn, the more expensive materials used reflected a higher skill level in the job market. Meanwhile, the lower skilled Irish, mostly living in the First Ward, lived in homes that reflected their skills, which were made of far cheaper materials.

It is important to acknowledge the importance of the different types of housing and area of residence in relation to the Irish. As this thesis as stated, there were Irish present outside of the First Ward who had a larger set of skills. For example, the Irish in the Third Ward were able
to use their clerical skill set to achieve a higher place in the labor market and receive more wealth, thus leading to a better living arrangement. As time passed, more Irish had begun to hone and improve their skills. This led to a large number of Irish moving out of the First Ward and moving into the Eighth Ward, where more expensive housing was available. This can also be seen with the crafted charts in previous chapters that detail the amount of Irish present in each of these three wards, their occupation levels and the details relating to the materials used to craft their homes.

Based on the information provided, it is clear that the Irish were able to take the necessary steps toward social mobility and becoming a powerful group for change in Buffalo. However, the Irish still needed more assistance from suitable leaders to make further advancements and cement their place in society. With the entry of Bishop Timon in 1847, the Buffalo Irish were able to make these necessary advancements. With the talent and efforts made by Bishop Timon, the Irish were able to improve their position in society more so than before. This can be seen with the Bishop advocating for more social reform among the Irish populace, encouraging sobriety, furthering education, and providing additional resources such as hospitals. In addition to this, Timon also brought in additional social leaders such as the Sisters of Charity, the Sisters of Mercy, and Thomas D’Arcy McGee.

While Bishop Timon and other leaders provided more resources and aid to the Irish, it is also important to acknowledge the other aspects that were advocated for to help aid the Irish. Timon regularly advocated for social reform among the Irish and encouraged more civil interactions with other ethnic groups in Buffalo. This in turn reflects the pluralistic narrative that David Gerber established in his piece of work. Again, this deals heavily with the information provided by this thesis that states how the Irish evolved in Buffalo’s society and how the group were able
to establish themselves by 1865, which was further supported with the Irish contributing to the American Civil War. This thesis has shown that the Irish immigrants who settled in Buffalo had, over time, became a socially mobile group and established themselves as a powerful group in the city. By examining the ways in which the Irish migrated to America and subsequently Buffalo, their several hardships were detailed. One large contribution made by this thesis was the analysis of the three wards in Buffalo that contained the highest number of Irish in the city. In addition to this, the charts crafted by utilizing data from the New York State Census of 1855 reflects the early advancements made by the Irish. Afterwards, with the introduction of specific leaders in Irish society and the establishment of different institutions, the Irish were able to make headway in Buffalo and interact in a larger pluralistic society. By the mid-1860s, and after the Irish in Buffalo contributed to the American Civil War by enlisting in the Union army, they were recognized as almost equal members of a larger ethnic population. In addition, this thesis has added to the historiography of Irish American history by analyzing a period of time that most Irish American historians ignore or do not spend enough time studying. This is further proven by the incorporation of both national census data, the New York State Manuscript census of 1855, multiple newspaper excerpts, political cartoons of that era, and several pieces of historical works. Further advancements were also made in the subsequent decades wherein the Irish continued as a strong force for change in Buffalo, New York.
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