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### The Challenge of E. Pluribus Unum: Waterfront Workers During the Civil War in Buffalo, New York

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The Challenge of E. Pluribus Unum: Waterfront Workers During the Civil War in Buffalo, New  
York

By

Anthony E. Gil

A Thesis in  
History

Master of Arts  
May 2021

State University of New York  
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## **PREFACE**

*“A place of immense resort”*

*-Holland Land Company’s description of the Buffalo area in 1789*

For those of us who still walk and enjoy the many restaurants and attractions found within Buffalo’s Harbor area and historic Cobblestone District, there is an undeniable essence in the air as one confronts the structural remnants of Buffalo’s history. Indeed, every cobblestone street, every monumental grain elevator, and every rusty warehouse harkens us back to a time when the city of Buffalo was expanding. For instance, hidden gems relative to this growth still linger in our city, awaiting to be rediscovered and placed in the fascinating narrative that is Buffalo’s history. For only one look at those skyscraping grain elevators and Buffalonians of today can catch a glimpse of the technological advantage that placed Buffalo at the pinnacle of grain trade in 1860.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, with one look at those decaying and dormant warehouses scattered about, residents of today can see where generations of hardworking Buffalonians spent their days working to pay bills and support their families. Lastly, as one looks upon the vast rail network infused into Buffalo’s modern landscape, the notion of a past steeped in commercial triumphs, occupies the mind. In fact, as one traverses Buffalo’s Harbor and Cobblestone District, one can feel the past persistently reaching out, poking through modern construction, to remind us that a grand American story still remains hidden, yet to be discovered and appreciated.

Moreover, as scholars and local historians alike continue to unravel Buffalo’s history, it has become apparent that Buffalo’s Harbor and Cobblestone District contain some of the most exhilarating stories in the city’s history. Two of those stories will be told in incredible detail for the very first time here, in this study. Indeed, compiled by my own research in 2019 while at the

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<sup>1</sup> David Gerber. *The Making of An American Pluralism: Buffalo, New York 1825-60*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989. pp 52.

Research Library of the Buffalo History Museum, I discovered that in 1862 and 1863 both Buffalo's Harbor area and Cobblestone District witnessed violent and even racially charged riots.

In a brief iteration, Buffalo's riot on August 11, 1862, began along the docks at 2 p.m. when the police tried to break up a violent crowd of both German and Irish stevedores. Buffalo's stevedores were on strike because of a wage discrepancy —originally contracted at the rate of twenty cents per hour, these workers felt cheated as they often went home with ten cents per hour. But regardless of their message or cause, reports from concerned citizens told that these stevedores were seen looting barrels of lager beer and physically forcing workers within nearby warehouses to join their cause. This sight, witnessed by three officers and local residents, resulted in a lawful encounter with the Buffalo Police. Soon, seven officers of the fledgling Buffalo Police force, headed by their Chief, appeared to confront the mob of stevedores. In the process of arresting its leaders, a fight ensued that featured the use of paving stones, clubs, fists, and in the end, a singular revolver wielded by a heroic police officer known as Darcy. On a broad level, this small riot was very telling of the atmosphere in 1860s Buffalo. For instance, the vulnerability and shortcomings of Buffalo's police, an exploitative job market along Buffalo's docks, and an early instance of labor peace, are just a few of the insights discernable at face value.

Nonetheless, even as Buffalo's residents and police force emerged victorious and stronger after defeating the stevedore mob in 1862, another series of tumultuous events would rock the city the very next year on July 6, 1863. Starting at 2 p.m. in Buffalo's Cobblestone District, an Irishman named McLaughlin attempted to break up a verbal altercation between an African American named Williams and another white man. Witnesses to this argument later told Buffalo papers that racially charged language was at the center of the two men's quarrel. In fact,

witnesses recalled that when McLaughlin intervened, he too continued to hurl racial epithets at Williams. Enraged and feeling even more threatened now that McLaughlin had stepped in, Williams produced an eight-inch revolver from his coat and shot McLaughlin square in the chest. Before McLaughlin's body even hit the ground, Williams began running for his life as every white on looker in the immediate area chased after him in the spirit of exacting a wicked form of racial justice. But no matter how fast Williams may have been, the mob of whites caught up with him and began to beat him severely. Williams' beating did not last long however, as three patrolmen of the newly doubled and newly armed Buffalo Police, noticed and engaged the white crowd. These three officers were able to stop the beating, arrest Williams for the murder of McLaughlin, and move him to the safety of their police station. As a result, the unsatisfied crowd of whites persisted by following the police and their prisoner to the police station. Once in front of the station, members of the mob cried out for the police to give Williams up, vowing to tear down their precinct brick by brick if not appeased. But of course the police did not plan on turning over their prisoner to a blood-thirsty mob.

Instead, they arranged for a transport carriage to come and take Williams away to another station. In the midst of this prisoner transfer, the mob caught a glimpse of Williams and began attacking the police. The police fought back with great effectiveness, wielding their newly issued revolvers and batons, and after an unsuccessful foray to lynch Williams, the mob redirected its attention onto Buffalo's black community. The mob proceeded to attack and vandalize black-owned businesses, black neighborhoods, and blacks themselves. In one of the more riveting episodes in this awful chain of events, the white mob was seen attacking black dockworkers both on and off of cargo ships anchored along the docks. In the end, some thirty black people were hurt, two were murdered, and fourteen whites had been arrested. Among those arrested, a

particularly repugnant character known as “Happy Jack,” was charged as one of the day’s principal agitators. As for Buffalo’s (non-participatory) residents, the aftermath of this terrible event conjured a great sorrow as citizens openly declared their disdain and horror for the racial violence that had befallen their city. One person, Buffalo Mayor William Fargo, vowed to never let it happen again, and in the late hours of July 6<sup>th</sup> he conferred the oath of service onto dozens of new policemen and firefighters.

There is no doubt that these events are both historically and morally shocking. In 1862 an unknown episode in the noble fight for fair wages—a struggle that would ultimately rise to center stage during the progressive era (1920s)—is brought to light via highly creditable firsthand accounts that convey a past in which class, ethnic, and labor frictions often coalesced into violent events. Likewise, in 1863 those same firsthand sources were on the scene once more to confirm that a previously hidden and devastating race riot, erupted in Buffalo’s Cobblestone District. Indeed, what is even more profound about the events of 1863, is that the principal motivation (racism) was no different than that which motivated rioters in Detroit and New York City that very same year (1863).

However, even with this brief rendering and assessment in the historical and moral meaning behind Buffalo’s riots, a staggering number of questions linger. A few treated thoroughly in this study: Who were these men? And what caused them to riot? Can one identify any similar or related incidents of unrest? What specifically committed Buffalonians to unrest in 1862? Why does it matter if the stevedore mob of 1862 was comprised of both German and Irish workers? Why was the black community targeted in 1863? And, why was the Buffalo Police so ineffective in 1862 compared to 1863? These are just a few of the many questions that will come

to be iterated and clarified across this study as the story of Buffalo's back-to-back riots and the historical backdrop of Civil War-era unrest into which they fall, is illuminated.

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**CHAPTER 1**  
*Historiography*  
*of*  
*Nineteenth Century*  
*Immigration, Labor, and Racism*

## Introduction to Chapter 1

As more and more research is done into life during the Civil War and the societal evolution brought by nineteenth century issues and developments, historians have begun to see larger forces at play. In fact, as the sub-discipline of social history advances, the easier it is for us to sort out the intricacies of American life in the past. Particularly when referring to the Civil War-era, topics of less dimension such as battles, politics, and historical figures often cloud our ability to dive further into the social dynamics at play during our country's most divisive century and destructive war. Therefore, a progressive view of history that often skips over the complicated essence of the times, will not be taken into account here. Instead, the notion that history is inevitable, is replaced with an assessment of social problems that tell history in its true form of excitement, indecisiveness, and irony. Thus, the object of this study takes on a dual purpose— 1) to illuminate what issues directed and occupied the mind of a riotous nineteenth century American and 2) to share two crucial, yet unheard of, episodes relative to widespread unrest seen during the 1860s.

Therefore, chapter one will bring clarity to what is otherwise a difficult time period to comprehend. Indeed, there are numerous moving parts when one begins to ponder the historical, political, economic, domestic, and philosophical elements that have influenced the development of American society in the nineteenth century (particularly before 1860). In turn, in an effort to sharpen this study's focus, the upcoming section will serve to illuminate the vast intricacies behind three principal forces most relative to riots seen both in urban centers of the North and Buffalo's streets alike: (1) mass immigration, (2) labor dynamics, and (3) discrimination of race. Thus, to address this daunting task ahead of us, it is best to acquaint ourselves with a number of historians who have dedicated time and effort to the pursuit of intellectual contributions in the

fields of immigration history, labor history, and the history of racial discrimination in early America.

### Immigration

Therefore, in looking at leading works in the field of immigration history during the nineteenth century, Oscar Handlin's *The Uprooted, The Epic Story of the Great Migrations That Made America* (1951), John Higham's, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925* (1955), Timothy Meagher's "Irish All the Time: Ethnic Consciousness Among the Irish in Worcester, Massachusetts, 1880-1905" (1985), Walter Kamphoefner's *The Westfalians, From Germany to Missouri* (1987), David Gerber's *The Making of An American Pluralism: Buffalo, New York 1825-60* (1989), and James R. Barrett's *The Irish Way, Becoming American in the Multi-Ethnic City* (2012) come to show a progression of scholarly research into the immigrant experience. Indeed, what will become apparent is that each of these leading scholars attempts to showcase and conceptualize a wide variety of aspects unique to the challenging process that faced millions of people —assimilation; from newly arrived immigrants to settled American citizens. In a brief sense, this approach will address a number of considerations ranging from the origins of the emigrant, influences behind mass migration occurrences, the ideology and impact of nativism, specific experiences relative to chain migration of whole German and Irish communities, to the assimilation/acclturation process experienced across the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century.

Beginning in 1951, leading scholar in the field of immigrant history Oscar Handlin, published his groundbreaking book, *The Uprooted*. In this work we are presented with a highly detailed, chronological, study of historical alienation and forced transportation of the 'emigrant'. Given to us in only two parts, 'Peasant Origins' and 'The Crossing', Handlin's principal goal is

to show exactly what forces, institutions, and events, facilitated poor people, originally peasants, into mass migration events.<sup>2</sup>

In his first section, Peasant Origins, Handlin emphasizes the importance and status that the village held in the minds/lives of peasants over a period of fifteen centuries. Before great changes to the status quo in the early modern period, peasants tended to focus on local issues and ambitions. Handlin placed marriage, growing surplus crops, consuming less, maintaining a patriarchy, and obtaining worthy dowries for their daughters, as paramount activities in peasant life. Nonetheless, all of this was ‘uprooted’ for the peasant class once large scale reforms to the ordering of society took effect. To lend greater context behind what Handlin identifies as significant events of change, relative to peasant life and the ordering of society, he points to four principal events. Moving country to country, Handlin alludes that Britain’s Enclosure Act of 1773, the French Revolution of 1789, Napoleon’s conquest of Europe ending in 1815, and the unification of Germany in 1871, were major facilitators in the displacement of the peasantry, and creation of the ‘emigrant’. Thus in his conclusion of part one, Handlin offered some statistical information to better show how widespread this effect was. He tells us that four million people emigrated from Britain, six million from German lands, two million from Scandinavian countries, five million from Italy, eight million from central/eastern Europe, and another three million from the Balkans, middle east, and Asia minor. Therefore, what was made abundantly clear, was that a mass exodus from Europe was occurring between 1830 and 1900; with Handlin estimating that during this time frame anywhere from twenty-eight to thirty-five million people emigrated from their homeland to America.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Oscar Handlin.. *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations That Made the American People*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1951.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pp. 33.

In his second section, *The Crossing*, Handlin examines and illuminates the full journey from homeland to America. In this endeavor, Handlin lays before his readers, four stages that every emigrant who came to America between 1830 and 1900 had to pass through on their journey. Stage one referred to the land journey associated with emigrating from any given homeland. Handlin tells us that prior to the 1840s, peasants were allowed to travel in and out of foreign countries. However, as millions of people began to follow in their footsteps over the coming decades, governments across Europe instituted passports and identifications, and began conducting investigations to determine if an emigrant was dodging criminal charges or fleeing military service in their home country. Stage two in this journey dealt with the destination in which all emigrants found themselves, and upon the completion of their land journey—the Seaport. Indeed, Handlin tells us that once arrived at an already overcrowded seaport, emigrant families ran into even more hardships. One of the principal issues was purchasing a ticket to cross the Atlantic. Prior to government intervention, a ticket's price, time of departure, and boarding location was not given to its purchaser. Thus as a result, many emigrant families went broke waiting for their ship; as landlords collected rent for room and board.<sup>4</sup>

In turn, if a family should happen to run into their ship's Captain in the streets, and board his ship without being left in the massive crowds, then the emigrants entered stage three. Stage three was the physical crossing of the Atlantic, and as Handlin describes, conditions aboard a ship progressively improved from near squalor to relative comfort between 1840 and 1900. Nonetheless, overcrowding, lack of privacy, personal isolation amongst strangers, and sea sickness were all common problems, that only relented as technology made the crossing shorter in time and when broker companies standardized the industry. For instance, prior to 1870

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, pp. 34-49.

Handlin tells us that the journey could have been up to forty days long, and as one can imagine tensions flared, crimes occurred, disease spread, and lack of food frequently drove people to physical altercations. But, at the end of this long journey was stage four—life in the American port of arrival. In this last stage, the emigrant faced the same exact problems they were accustomed to during the second stage. For, if emigrant families, who were often drained monetarily by this point, could avoid con artists and live amongst their own kind, they would be able to settle and find work in said overcrowded and bustling seaport. Thus in this expansive work, Handlin concludes with a two part notion—(1) that the emigration process was an individually isolating process that strongly contrasted the communal life found in the ‘village’ and (2) that the destiny of the emigrant, and their destinations in America, were determined entirely at the mercy of outside historical forces.<sup>5</sup>

Moving on from Handlin, in 1955 John Higham’s *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925*, readers are exposed to all things related to and affected by the ideology of American nativism. With this general history, Higham takes his readers on a journey through the past in an effort to examine the foundations and evolution of religious, racial, and ethnic prejudice in America. Through this journey, which begins as early as the domination of Britain by the Anglo-Saxons, we are made to understand exactly how the origins of nativism and its American form coincided with American history. Higham makes clear in his study that every instance or event that contributed to a nativist agenda, would be taken to its logical conclusion. And, although abiding by these rules of engagement could serve as a restraint to his research, his

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

methodology provided an exceptional focus on the permeation of nativist ideology as the U.S. progressed into, and out of, the Civil War.<sup>6</sup>

To accomplish the conveyance of this study's conclusions successfully, Higham placed emphasis on two decades that showcased changes in nativism. The first decade that showed the emergence of American nativism, was the 1790s. For Higham, American politics during this time represented the continuation of anti-Catholic and anti-European sentiment that festered in England during the Protestant Reformation. To link these sentiments with the U.S., Higham cited the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 and American support of liberal revolutions in Latin America and Europe. With these references, Higham alluded to the idea that much of what American nativism was between 1790 and 1850, had already existed in English society for centuries. For instance, things like prejudice against Irish Catholics, a revered Anglo-Saxon heritage, resentment toward continental European immigrants like the Germans, and protection of constitutional rights, had precedence in England as early as 1534. Therefore, by connecting with the traditional historical narrative that Englishmen had founded the Thirteen Colonies, Higham asserted that Americans inevitably inherited some of England's longstanding cultural traditions, especially an original form of nativism.<sup>7</sup>

Another decade that featured a change in American nativism was the 1850s. For Higham these years played a crucial role in explaining the evolution of American nativism into American nationalism. Higham writes that the U.S. during the 1850s transitioned from a highly divided society that prided itself on a distinctly Anglo-Saxon heritage, expanding liberty across the American continent, and protecting a work ethic that was viewed as uniquely American.

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<sup>6</sup> John Higham. *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press 1955.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 3-12.

However, all of these aspects of Antebellum America were challenged by decades of mass Irish and German immigration, and ultimately the Civil War of 1861. Nonetheless, Higham tells us that after 1865 the combination of mass immigration and the Civil War began to transform, receiving open rejection by the common nativist; who ultimately sought to recover the ‘original’ American way of life. However, working against this nativism were minorities and their supporters, who according to Higham, scored a number of victories against their nativist foes over the nineteenth century. Indeed, inspired by the common humanity formed through bloodshed in the Civil War, a new sense of unity that Higham believed to be modern American nationalism, began to coalesce.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, in order for Higham to illustrate the larger significance of both decades, and their relation to American nativism, many of his ten chapters were spent introducing historical context and evidence from both European and U.S. histories. Nonetheless, after introducing how American nativism transformed into American nationalism, including all kinds of people, Higham shifted into a chronological approach that addressed the dates on his cover, 1860 to 1925. Nonetheless, this work shares a number of groundbreaking insights and a masterful analysis in understanding and defining who nativists were and what they sought to accomplish. The first revelation is that although America had an ‘Anglo-Protestant nativism’ sewed into the fabric of its foundation, only through heated conflict (in later centuries) would it emerge as a dominant and violent ideology. Secondly, that American nativism should be categorized as an impulsive behavior that appealed, and was susceptible, to many generations of both English and American alike. And lastly, as it relates to immigration, Higham has established historical

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid pp. 5-7.



grievances between nativists, Germans, and the Irish. Grievances that will explode in 1844, 1855, and the 1860s.<sup>9</sup>

However, there is something to be said about this transformative time in American history and what Higham's work contributed to the historical narrative. For instance, after Higham's enlightening study on American nativism, we learn that U.S. history is full of unexplained phenomena that offer us a chance to understand American society on a deeper historical level. Additionally, Higham exposed that the U.S. and its citizens had not always come to a consensus of tolerance when it came to foreigners. In fact, Higham's study of nativism has its basis in the ironic notion that Americans had not always been tolerant of other people, and at one point actively worked to curb immigration and assimilation. This is an interesting perspective as not only does it go against the grain of a progressive approach to history, but it also tells the story and power of an often overlooked ethnic group, the Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Thus through learning about their struggles and behaviors throughout American history we can gain an understanding of the prejudice, discrimination, and societal norms that influenced a significant number of early Americans.

Lastly, in an effort to expand further on this topic I have endeavored to study riots and events of civil unrest during the 1860s. Although Higham explored a similar strand of this widespread eruption, he did not offer a focus on any one area affected by these factions. Instead he simply studied their larger effects. This is where I intend to make a contribution, by showing how two social questions, two nativist riots, and the Enrollment Act of 1863 had roots in, reignited, and influenced nativists in the late nineteenth century. Thus equipped with Higham's

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

analysis of nativism up to 1865, firm explanations for nativist rhetoric, behaviors, and sentiments toward immigrants across the mid to late nineteenth century, are given some contextual depth.

In turn, with the broader conflicts of immigration established by Handlin and Higham, a dive into narrower cases that expose how exactly individual German and Irish communities reacted and assimilated into American culture and society is possible. One of the first works to focus on this topic is Timothy Meagher's journal article, "Irish All the Time", published in the *Journal of Social History* in 1985. In this article, Meagher analyzes the dynamics, reactions, and process of assimilation, relative to two generations of Irish that came to dominate the fabric of Worcester, Massachusetts between 1880 and 1900. In differentiating those two generations of Irish, Meagher identified the "Irish born Celts" and the "American born". The primary difference between these two, as Meagher puts it, is not rooted in class struggle or even economic strife. Rather, a greater emphasis is placed on the levels of cultural pride that characterized each generation.<sup>10</sup>

Within the "Irish born Celts", cultural adherence and pride were thoroughly separated from that of America's. Furthermore, these Irish men and women possessed firsthand knowledge and memories of their ancestral homeland —characteristics that often influenced a large amount of cultural carryover. As a result, many of these Irish continually clung to old country traditions throughout their lives in America. In contrast, Meagher points to the first generation of American-born Irish, as the first group within Worcester's Irish community that actively reversed this trajectory. To set the context, Meagher reminds us that the great Irish flight from the Potato Famine during the 1840s and 1850s had all but slowed to a minute fraction by 1860. To back this up, at least for Worcester, Meagher drew directly from the 1880 and 1900 census

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas Meagher. "Irish All the Time: Ethnic Consciousness Among the Irish in Worcester, Massachusetts, 1880-1905." *Journal of Social History* 1985. pp. 273-303.

records. What he found was that American-born Irish in 1900, closed the population gap and outnumbered that of the Irish-born Celts. As a result, it was clear that within Worcester's Irish community, circa 1900, many families did not possess firsthand knowledge of their ethnic homeland. For, only through the speeches of local orators and the conversations exchanged within letters did the American-born Irish rediscover their homeland.<sup>11</sup>

However, as it relates to immigration history, the immigrant experience, and even Buffalo's riots, it is clear that America's economy during the late nineteenth century was dominated by 'Yankee Protestants'. In fact, Meagher asserts that the Irish particularly were encouraged and rewarded by the "American acculturating process" with a sort of socially approved opportunity that allowed "American born" Irish to flood professions; most popularly law and politics. However, behind this great shift, Meagher upheld that pride for Ireland still held some level of popularity amongst Irish residents regardless of any decade. But, interestingly enough, Meagher affirmed that Irish nationalism and the fight for Irish home rule were aligned with American values and practices. For instance, late nineteenth century 'Yankees' sat in approval of the Irishmen's proper "conservative agitation" —engaging in the American rights to form associations, organize protests, and build strong religious communities.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, with this social controversy between an active cultural retention (by the Irish) and the pressures/perspective of Yankees exposed, societal friction levied by mass immigration is discernable.

Next, in progressing chronologically through the historiography of this sub-discipline, another major work dealing with a specific enclave of immigrants emerged in 1987. Indeed, Dr. Walter Kamphoefner published his *The Westfalians, from Germany to Missouri*, in an attempt to

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

understand and share his concept of ‘chain migration’. Taking the opposite perspective of Handlin, Kamphoefner strove to show the immigrant indeed possessed the intellect and ability to speculate, prospect, and target specific areas for settlement. Moreover, Kamphoefner abandoned the idea that Handlin’s ‘village’ had been destroyed, and asserted that immigrants, via chain migration, sought to replicate their village of old, once in America. Nonetheless, Kamphoefner’s greatest contribution was his argument that even peasant migrants could set predetermined destinations that were not influenced by mere chance.<sup>13</sup>

First, we must define ‘chain migration’ in the context of this study; as a process by which entire towns and villages relocated to a specific destination in America. Across this book, Kamphoefner highlights three principal elements behind why so many Germans from Westphalia specifically, migrated to America. The first was the decline of protoindustrialization and cottage industries. The second, popularity of chain migration, and thirdly, both economic and political hardship. In explaining the decline of cottage industries Kamphoefner tells us that millions of peasants and minor artisans found themselves unemployed as machines and factories were on the rise. This loss in productivity and commercial success sat at the core of what pushed such a tremendous amount of people to leave their homeland. In fact, Kamphoefner believed that the full impact from the decline of protoindustrialization may never be fully assessed.<sup>14</sup>

Nonetheless, alongside the decline of the cottage industry was the determined nature of the Westphalians, who thoroughly desired to move to the American heartland and become farmers. Indeed, throughout this book Kamphoefner alluded to the notion that a first wave of Westphalians came to America in the late 1830s, and were able to become independently successful farmers. These families wrote back, urging their relatives to take the journey across

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<sup>13</sup> Walter Kamphoefner. *The Westfalians, from Germany to Missouri*. Princeton: University of Princeton Press 1987.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

the Atlantic as well, thus facilitating a chain reaction in migration to specific locations. Lastly, on top of the Westphalian's initial probe into American society, Kamphoefner placed great emphasis on the failed revolutions of 1848, as one of the primary influencers in pushing the lower to middle classes out of their homeland. In a sense, these people were fleeing the fragmented and often hostile provinces that made up Germany prior to later unification; and ultimately they indeed found a new life in America as prosperous farmers in Missouri.<sup>15</sup> Thus upon reflection, perhaps the most important contribution made by Kamphoefner to the study of immigration, was the notion that the 'typical' immigrant experience did not exist. Rather, instead of lumping conventional wisdom about nineteenth century immigration into one 'picture', historians should treat each ethnic community as though they have their own unique story, process of migration, and factors affecting them.

Another author who looks into a specific enclave of immigrants, let alone immigrants so relative to later portions of this study, is David Gerber in his most impressive work, *The Making of An American Pluralism*. Within this interdisciplinary work, readers are exposed to an immense amount of social, economic, political, and religious history that characterized the German and Irish communities living in Buffalo between 1825 and 1860. In this work Gerber tapped into an underwritten era of American history and showcased it as a formative period of American society prior to the Civil War. Gerber accomplishes this by elaborating on a phenomenon that he terms as "Pluralism". To Gerber, the 'American Pluralism' of the nineteenth century can be characterized by the coalescence of uniquely American economic, cultural, political, and religious differences. Therefore, in his book Gerber seeks to answer how traditional

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

and emerging elements within society interacted and affected the trajectory of American culture in Buffalo.

Although the concept of Pluralism is fairly complex, Gerber endeavored to make it clearer. He began with an introduction that clearly laid out the goals of his book, which were to show how ethnic groups, American politics, economics, and the dynamics of early Buffalo cooperated to position Buffalo at the height of its economic power by 1860. His plan to elaborate on this broad topic consists of a two-part approach. First, Gerber showed on a higher level, the issues, tensions, and forces at play across the U.S. prior to the year 1860. Next, Gerber brought his readers down to the local level by introducing them to numerous layers contributing to Buffalo's relative economic peak in the year 1860—showing that Buffalo's growth and success shared a direct correlation to trends in immigration and the global economics affecting early America.<sup>16</sup>

Naturally, his starting point began in 1789 with the founding of the earliest settlement in the Buffalo area, New Amsterdam. He then proceeded with a steady progression to 1860. During this chronological progression, Gerber painted a brief picture of the ethnic, religious, economic, political, and social characteristics present in Buffalo only. However, within this initial introduction, Gerber demarcated turning points in Buffalo's history with narratives from U.S. history. However, beyond this introductory section it is clear that Gerber's work shifts from a chronological style to a more topical approach. Thus in his following chapters, Gerber set his own topics and did not adhere to a definite chronology. Therefore, throughout all of his twelve chapters, can be found four larger parts related to specific topics of Gerber's study.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> David A. Gerber. *The Making of An American Pluralism: Buffalo, New York 1825-60*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press 1989.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

In part one, which contains chapters one and two, Gerber takes a chronological approach to Buffalo's dynamic history until 1860. In Part two, *The Formation of the Provincial Bourgeoisie*, which contains chapters three through five, Gerber reworked the approach of his study by elaborating on class formation. In this part, Gerber dove into magnificent detail about immigrants and their history before coming to America. He explained that certain turning points in some countries acted as triggers, which caused families to emigrate to America. For the Irish, it was the Potato Famine, religious persecution, and social immobility that coerced them to emigrate. For German immigrants, it was several wars, widespread poverty, social immobility, and religious tensions that urged many to emigrate. However, no matter which group Gerber dove into, he concluded that many immigrants eventually found their way to Buffalo.<sup>18</sup>

Nonetheless, this conclusion stands in partial agreement with Kamphoefner's assessment, in that although many immigrants consciously arranged their arrival to Buffalo, the matter of whether their settlement in the city was voluntary or forced, is another question. And indeed, many of those who found themselves in Buffalo were forced to settle in the area as their economic prospects, savings, and so on became ever stringent.

In Part three, *The Rise of Ethnocultural Diversity and Pluralism*, Gerber exposed what types of immigrants made their way to both Buffalo and other eastern seaboard cities. In this section Gerber began by explaining the role which Buffalo played in an era of mass immigration. He tells us that in the early 1800s droves of German (1<sup>st</sup>) and Irish (2<sup>nd</sup>) made their way to Buffalo, as part of a historical worker migration in the Great Lakes region. However, Gerber explained that as this wave of migrant workers grew larger over the decades, many of them began to settle in Buffalo. Gerber then raises the point that many immigrants were forced to stay

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

in Buffalo due to a lack or loss of funds, preventing the continuation of their journey west. Thus, Gerber painted a picture of both early America and early Buffalo, as a place that became ethnically diverse as a result of mass immigration. Lastly, in elaborating the process of immigration and settlement, Gerber simultaneously mixed in chapters of religious and social history that allow the reader to understand that Buffalo and many cities like it, were entering into a new era unlike anything before.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, in part four, *The Politics of Pluralism*, Gerber concluded his study by iterating on how immigrants overcame the prejudicial political system they faced, once settled in America. He did this by comparing and contrasting political stances on immigration, both in the earlier half and latter half of the nineteenth century. He explained that a great number of people outside of the immigrant communities, such as native-born Americans, had a desire to assist newcomers with getting settled in. He also did a thorough job of explaining laws and groups that opposed immigration. Nonetheless, Gerber reverted back to the simple fact that, American politicians could neither prevent Americans from reacting positively based on their compassion for fellow human beings, or negatively toward immigrants, who arrived daily and by the thousands. In turn, Gerber pushes forward and elaborates on the various roles in government which succeeding generations of German and Irish immigrants came to occupy. Thus, in his examination of immigrants who ascend the political hierarchy, Gerber reinforced his examination and delineation, claiming that Irish and German immigrants began to truly assimilate into American culture by 1860.<sup>20</sup> And although he mentions that Germans originally dominated Buffalo, holding a two-to-one ratio over their Irish counterparts, Gerber revealed that a sense of

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.



community prevailed that saw approval on both sides for combined social initiatives and political allegiance.

There is no doubt that Gerber's work is groundbreaking in that it thoughtfully examined the concept that is 'American Pluralism'. Other historians such as Karen Leonard, who reviewed Gerber's book for the *International Migration Review* in 1989, also agrees that Gerber adds to an under-examined part of American history in a way that is interesting for readers of any background. Leonard believes that Gerber's ideas and insights on ethnicity and its role in political power are crucial to understanding American Pluralism. Also, Leonard notes that although Gerber introduced us to several ethnic groups, he takes a "holistic" approach when it comes to weaving their stories together. Another major takeaway that Leonard retains from Gerber's book, is that Gerber treats native-born Americans as an emerging ethnic group that possesses political power and occupies a higher status in society.<sup>21</sup>

Another historian who believes in the impact of Gerber's work is Jacob Judd. In his 1991 review of Gerber's book, Judd attested to the remarkable insights into the frontier Great Lake towns of Antebellum America. For Judd, Gerber has contributed the single greatest work to date that deals with economics and societal growth within the Great Lakes region. Judd also makes reference to the organized examination of "ethnicization" as it relates to the formation of classes and communities within the Antebellum period. All in all, Judd's main assessment is that Gerber's book will serve as the principal work for anyone interested in studying urban, regional, or social history in the Great Lakes region.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Karen Leonard, 1989. "The Making of an American Pluralism: Buffalo, New York 1825-60. Review." *International Migration Review*, 26(2) 689-690.

<sup>22</sup> Jacob Judd. "The Making of an American Pluralism: Buffalo, New York 1825-60. Review." *Journal of American History* 1991. pp 11.

Additionally, one historian Richard Oestreicher, writing for the *Business History Review* in 1989, asserted that Geber's work stood out from consensus historians who traditionally believed that ethnicity and class played no part in American politics or culture. Therefore, Oestreicher believed that Gerber's work served as a chief example of the emerging era of social historiography. Lastly, one major contribution of Gerber's work, mentioned by all three historians, was the examination of Buffalo's Anglo-Protestant elites. This group in Gerber's book was treated as an emerging ethnic entity, similar to that of the Irish and Germans. This was a masterful method of looking at the native American-born community, by examining the group in ways that were traditionally neglected by previous historians.<sup>23</sup>

Although Gerber made unprecedented breakthroughs in understanding how ethnicity, politics, and religion played a formative element in Antebellum America, his study still has one weakness—the role of African Americans both freed and enslaved. Some questions are still left open, such as how blacks impacted this larger phenomenon of Pluralism? How can their struggle for freedom be incorporated into this formative period of American culture? And how can a greater examination of African American culture and social interaction assist us in understanding why our country broke out into a civil war in 1861, just one year after Gerber's cut-off year? Therefore, later in this study I will examine how some of these earlier formative elements, mentioned in Gerber's work, would manifest into a new phenomenon of widespread civil unrest beyond 1860.

Lastly, concluding an examination of those who delved deep into the history of immigration, is the work of James R. Barrett. Indeed, in his work from 2012, *The Irish Way*,

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<sup>23</sup> Richard Oestreicher. "The Making of an American Pluralism: Buffalo, New York 1825-60. Review." *Business History Review* 1989, Vol 3. No 3. pp 675-676.

readers learn about Irish assimilation into American society within major urban areas. This book contained six chapters: 'The Street', 'The Parish', 'The Workplace', 'The Stage', 'The Machine', and 'The Nation', all of which strove to illuminate the Irish experience within various American arenas.<sup>24</sup>

Drawing tremendously from primary source material, compiled from those who documented the Irish experience, culture, violence, and achievements in America, Barrett examined the Irish in their most concentrated areas. Indeed, Barrett's focus on the urban centers of New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago, proceeds in a fashion that asserts that by 1920 the Irish community was by far the dominant ethnic group in America's urban centers. Further expanding on this notion, Barrett goes on to show how the traditions of 'native-born Irish' manifested into street gangs, tight-knit religious communities, labor organizations, political juggernauts, and even trend setters in American popular culture.<sup>25</sup>

In some of the finer points to Barrett's findings, members of the Irish community were seen to act in one of two ways, conservatively or liberally. For instance, it was noted that Irish union leaders tended to be conservative when faced with the option of accepting unskilled newcomers. In contrast, common Irishmen could be credited for liberal fights for social justice, worker's rights, and urban reforms. However, just as Barrett illuminated the intriguing and somewhat positive effects of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Irish, he too exposed the negative. In this aspect we learn that Irish gangs enforced racial 'deadlines' within their respective urban centers, that both Irish and non-Irish Catholics were excluded from parish communities, and that Jews, Poles, Germans, Italians, and Anglo-Protestant elites represented

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<sup>24</sup> James R. Barrett. *The Irish Way: Becoming American in the Multiethnic City*. New York City: The Penguin Press 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

threats to Irish mobility. With this kind of work, we are left with a very articulate idea of how the Irish dominated major urban areas by 1920. However, one objection within Barrett's study becomes clear as one ponders the history of cities that do not have an Irish majority, such as Buffalo.<sup>26</sup>

### Labor

Thus with a complete and thorough dive into the historiography of immigration history, covering journeys, chain migration, experiences, and assimilation, a branch off into those scholars who focused their efforts on working-class labor history can be presented. For instance, those authors who will serve to represent this branch consist of Ira Katznelson's, and Aristide Zolberg's *Working-Class Formation Nineteenth-Century Patterns* (1986), David Montgomery's, *Citizen Worker* (1992), and Peter Way's *Common Labor* (1993). Additionally, besides these authors' mutual interest in labor history, each historian placed a great emphasis on the Civil War as a transformative event for many aspects within American society. Furthermore, each historian offered their own methods and theses for identifying when and where specific societal transformations can be discerned.

To begin, *Working-Class Formation Nineteenth-Century Patterns* by Ira Katznelson and Aristide Zolberg, stands as a groundbreaking study that is intrinsically relative to this study. Produced by a collection of authors under their supervision, Katznelson and Zolberg strove to provide a different approach to working-class history than that of the later and highly influential David Montgomery. Put briefly, the authors of this work conducted a study just as ambitious as the topic of the book itself. Beginning in 1978, Katznelson and Zolberg launched a study at the University of Chicago that sought to challenge the entire concept of what we define as a 'class'

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

in nineteenth century America. Their initial idea was to create studies about the working-class which were free from “teleology and sociological abstraction and overcome the fragmentation of ad hoc case studies”<sup>27</sup>. In facilitating this study, Ira and Aristide obtained funding from the Council for European Studies, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the German Marshall Fund. With these funds, they put together three research teams, one in France, one in Germany, and one in the United States. Each of these groups were responsible for contributing essays about their designated country. All of these studies culminated in a highly detailed work that analyzed the working-class and class formation in terms of structure, ways of life, dispositions, and collective action.<sup>28</sup>

In part one about France, we learn from Michelle Perrot and Alian Cottureau about artisans, factory workers, and the formation of France’s working-class by 1900. Within this segment a chronological approach is utilized, beginning with the French Revolution and ending in 1900. In this section, both authors attempted to conceptualize what effect the Catholic Church, pre-industrial/pre-capitalist traditions, and geopolitics played in the ‘proletarianization’ and class formation of the French people. They tell us that the French working-class had a long history of struggle against the state, which wielded religious authority and championed social hierarchy.<sup>29</sup>

In part two, about the United States, we learn from Amy Bridges and Martin Shefter about America's working-class before and after the Civil War. In both of their essays, these authors argued that America’s traditions, growing industrial economy, politics, and immigrant groups impacted the structure, way of life, disposition, and collective action of the American

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<sup>27</sup> Ira Katznelson , Aristide Zolberg. *Working-Class Formation Nineteenth-Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University 1986. pp. vii.

<sup>28</sup> Ira Katznelson , Aristide Zolberg. *Working-Class Formation Nineteenth-Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University 1986.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

worker. Additionally, special emphasis was placed on incoming Irish and German immigrants, as they quite literally changed the fabric of America's early job market by offering a disproportionate ratio of unskilled to skilled labor. Both authors tell us this massive incursion, on the part of incoming immigrants, actually slowed the progression of improved working conditions. Indeed, this reflects the way in which American society operated prior to the Civil War, with the Anglo-Protestants on top, and immigrants and Africans at the bottom. However, both Bridges and Shefter stressed that immigrant communities 'became American' in combat. As our bloody Civil War progressed, the North suffered defeats at the hands of the South. And as the idea of quick victory for the North faded from public opinion, it was realized that in order to truly win, sacrifices would be required from almost every person.<sup>30</sup>

Nonetheless, by 1861, both authors tell us that compared to native-born Americans, the majority of the rest of the population in major Northern cities were Irish and German. In addition to this, legislation in the form of the pervasive 1863 Draft forced the Civil War onto immigrant communities. Although these communities were mandated to produce and fight for the Union, however, their sacrifice yielded social mobility upon return from combat. In fact, this mobility elevated those previously shunned immigrants, allowing them to enter the mainstream as state and federal officials, respected warriors, and wealthy merchants. Thus, as indicated by both authors, the decades immediately after the U.S. Civil War presented a massive opportunity for American workers as unions, higher wages, and labor laws (instituting a standard for working conditions) made their debut for the first time in American history.<sup>31</sup>

In part three, about Germany, we learn from Juergen Kocka and Mary Nolan about German class formation in a chronological format, beginning in 1800 and ending in 1900. Prior

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

to explaining the transition through the nineteenth century, Kocka first identified pre-existing notions within the historical field. For instance, in the introduction of Kocka's essay, he tells us that traditionally the study of German class formation had a Marxist tint to it, in that all grades of laborer were grouped into one group, referred to as the 'working-class'. To Kocka, this traditional system was too general, as a more comprehensive or 'social' study was needed in order to dive further into tensions and conflicts within each layer of Germany's working-class. Therefore, Kocka chose to deviate from the old Marxist approach, and pay special attention to the individual plights and triumphs within each category of laborer.<sup>32</sup> In turn, we learn that Germans workers of the nineteenth century were indeed proficient in skilled labor. This stands in contrast to the general notion that a majority of immigrants coming to the U.S. during the same time frame were unskilled/low-level workers.

All in all, the scholars who made this book possible succeeded in redefining how we characterize the working-class of the nineteenth century. It is made abundantly clear that although we in modern times have this notion of who and what the working-class was, there will always be another perspective to uncover and explore. This notion that there will always be more to learn, is relative to my own study in the phenomenon of civil unrest in Northern American cities after 1860. In my own study, I endeavor to conceptualize the progression of our nation's social, economic, political, and religious tensions that fueled, both industrial and racially motivated riots. In doing so, the trajectory of my studies have aligned with that of Katznelson and Zolberg, the editors of this book. For by gaining a deeper understanding of the working-class both in Europe and the United States around 1860, I am able to discern new information and contribute to the historical literature. Thus with my addition to the literature, my study will open

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, pp. 279-352.

several discussions about civil unrest as it pertains to the struggles of America's working-class, the Civil War, and 1860s Buffalo. Indeed, what will become apparent is that issues facing various ethnicities within the immigrant community will come to multiple tipping points punctuated by acts of civil unrest.

For another firm grip on the history of the working-class, we need look no further than the works of Dr. David Montgomery. Dr. Montgomery was perhaps the most influential labor historian in the U.S. until his untimely death in 2011. His studies are numerous, his legacy is passed on by hundreds of ivy league graduates, and his passion for labor history revolutionized the field. As illustrated by his disciple, James Barrett in his article, *Remembering David Montgomery*, Montgomery's central focus was to redefine what we know about labor history. He and his students confronted questions of race, ethnicity, and the effects of industrialization on the working-class. They found that a complicated realm of prejudice, racism, politics, economics, and society sat at the core of understanding working-class history. All of these conclusions sparked a renaissance of research into the social relationships of various factions that made up the working-class. This research was conducted by several generations of scholars under Dr. Montgomery's supervision and has set the standard for studies in labor history ever since.

Nonetheless, in his ground breaking work, *Citizen Worker*, Montgomery thoroughly examines the worker-government relationship that has existed for all of American history. Although Montgomery specifically focuses on instances between 1800 and 1900, readers learn a tremendous amount of information surrounding the origins of the nineteenth century working-class American. Thus, in achieving this examination, Montgomery used primary source material, including court records, census records, newspapers, and many others. Indeed, with these sources Montgomery emphasizes struggles for male suffrage, dynamics of indentured servants, and the



rise of a wage-labor society. As to the geographical locations significant to this study, cities like Philadelphia, Providence, New York City, and Boston sit at the forefront of an assessment of industrial New England.

Beginning with the struggle for male suffrage, Montgomery works to show a progression. Starting in 1790, Montgomery claims that land ownership was a requirement for any man wishing to participate in local government. Indeed, within any early New England locality, a council of major land holding aldermen (elected by minor land owners), would elect a Mayor/Magistrate or Justice of the Peace to enforce their local laws. Among the local laws important to Montgomery, were those that enforced the master-servant relationship through the threat of jail time. Thus we are presented with two major elements behind the origins of the American wage-earner: the practice of keeping indentured servants and laws keeping them in check.<sup>33</sup>

As described by Montgomery, European countries and the United States were awash with poor people who often had no skills, possessed little money, and resorted to crime to provide for themselves. Throughout this section, Montgomery alluded to the notion that leaders on the local, state, and national level made efforts to improve the standard of living, amongst the poor classes. Thus the age-old tradition of taking on indentured servants, was implemented on a massive scale. However, household servants could not facilitate a change in the well-being of indentured servants, especially those that angered their master. Instead what soon became a reality were government-assisted 'poor relief' funds, and the creation of the 'poorhouse'. As described by Montgomery and his sources, The Pennsylvania Society for the Encouragement of Manufactures and Useful Arts, built a factory worked by 'confined pauper labor' to afford the poorest people a

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<sup>33</sup> David Montgomery. *Citizen Worker: The Experience of Workers in the United States with Democracy and the Free Market during the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993. pp. 13-17.

productive place in society. Indeed, while laboring under the supervision of Almshouse guardsmen, paupers would not earn a wage at the beginning of the day; only if they could outproduce their production quota would they be compensated. Although it may be hard for us to understand the significance of such a system of production, Montgomery sees a clear correlation claiming, “[a] connection between early manufacturing enterprises and the poorhouse helps us understand the antipathy felt by many working people toward factories in the early nineteenth century.”<sup>34</sup>

Nonetheless, even with these opportunity zones established for the poorest in society, something was needed to enforce social norms, supremacy of the master, and subordination of servants. In rediscovering some of the legal aspects behind this encirclement of the lower classes, Montgomery looked to records from both the Mayor’s Court and Penitentiary record of Philadelphia. In this we learn that local lawmakers “...threatened poor people who were simply too free.”<sup>35</sup> For, between 1790 and 1800 indentured servants were brought to court by their masters on charges of vagrancy, theft, and most popularly, absconding from service of the master. In the seemingly inevitable sentencing of the disobedient servant, a sentence of ten days or two weeks in prison was standard. Interestingly enough, Montgomery mentions that these types of sentences were short-lived, as the prosecuting master was also the one billed for housing, food, and sometimes alcohol in prison.<sup>36</sup>

However, Montgomery pointed to 1819 as the year that changed all of this. For after 1819 wage labor rose in popularity, with Montgomery asserting that the poorhouse could not compare with the output of mechanized production worked by wage-earning laborers. Indeed, in

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, pp. 30.

<sup>35</sup> Montgomery, 27.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

1819 the Philadelphia city authorities launched a campaign against idleness and vice, creating institutionalized social discipline enforced and centered upon wage labor. In effect, creating criminals out of those who did not earn a wage, and encouraging every would-be-servant to become a factory worker. To better understand this shift, Montgomery utilized a quote from a conversation between New York City shipyard boss, 'Boss Sneeded', and his worker Frank Harley in the post-indentured era. Sneeded said,

I don't want any indentures, and all that sort of thing. When I don't like you, or you don't like me, well quit and separate. Master and man, or man and wife had always better cut adrift when they get to quarrelling.<sup>37</sup>

Nonetheless, even with this new attitude propagating amongst commercial entrepreneurs of New England, debtor's prison and petty claims against poor laborers was still taking a ravaging toll on the poor urban community. For instance, so great was the problem of petty claims, that many people found themselves fighting over sums ranging from two to sixty cents in total. As a result of this strain on America's institution of justice, Congress passed bankruptcy laws for states, while individual states began to abolish debtor's prison (Pennsylvania in 1842 and Massachusetts in 1857).<sup>38</sup>

Overall what is plainly obvious from Montgomery's findings is that: what is traditionally known about the impact of the industrial revolution is wholly under-assessed. For what is presented in this book is a world into which mechanized production merged. Indeed, in a world where indentured servants, the creation of poorhouses, and poor relief funds were the norm, mechanized production assisted in freeing the poor from governmental enforcement; as well as societal enforcement surrounded by this system. In turn, with the democratization of this 'old

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<sup>37</sup> Montgomery, 34-35.

<sup>38</sup> Montgomery, 35-40.

world', Montgomery was able to connect the effects of wage-earning with the increase of the American electorate between 1840 and 1896.

In this endeavor, Montgomery emphasized particularly intriguing statistics about those citizens who voted between 1840 and 1896. For instance, within the election of 1840 specifically, out of the 2.5 million voters who cast their ballot, some 250,000 were enrolled in churches and lived in heavily populated/industrial areas like Providence, Rhode Island and Lawrence, Massachusetts. Montgomery went further and asserted that these citizens held almost no political sway, claiming that in Providence, some 28% of all the state's manufacturing and trade workers were disenfranchised due to voting laws. Likewise, the city of Lawrence possessed even less representation with only 15% of their population registered to vote. Nonetheless, Montgomery exposed an explosion in voter participation, showing that between 1840 and 1896, some 70-84% of the total number of eligible male voters voted in six consecutive presidential elections at the tail end of the nineteenth century.<sup>39</sup>

With these statistics in mind, Montgomery sought to understand why so many people were at first prohibited from participating in the voting process, and what exactly opened up voting to more adult males. What he found was a reoccurring pattern throughout the century — that initially gender, landownership, and the approval from town council members, gave influential people their power to vote, and status in the upper echelon of any given locality. But, as waged labor, political parties, and immigrants shaped the fabric of the country, new restrictions had to be put in place. Therefore, working from Dorr's Rebellion of 1842 (for greater voting rights), Montgomery correlates the 1850 passing of voter requirements by the

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<sup>39</sup> Montgomery, pp. 21-24.

\**Post-Indentured Era*- 1700-1819

\**Wage-Earner Era*- 1819-On

Landowners Convention in New England states. In short, these requirements consisted of poll taxes, literacy tests, landowning requirements, term of residency, and the completion of the naturalization process. However, after comparing the treatment of immigrants in New England, the Midwest, and of Chinese immigrants living in California, Montgomery concluded that the issue of foreign birth rather than landownership or residency was the chief problem behind the disqualified voters, many of whom were newcomer immigrants.<sup>40</sup> Thus, it was assimilation, political associations, and a number of other larger forces of American history that led to an increased voter turnout between 1840 and 1896. Nonetheless, as new literacy tests, higher poll taxes, lengthened residency requirements, in-person registration, and gender, were instituted (from 1896 and 1920) the goal was simply to minimize the American electorate, particularly in the South because of fears of voting by newly enfranchised African Americans.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, in light of this targeted disenfranchisement of both immigrant and black voting rights, it is clear that nativist sentiments were present throughout as the cyclical issue of ‘protecting the integrity of the electorate’ recurred.

Moving out of the insightful work of David Montgomery, we move into that of Peter Way. Within his work, *Common Labor*, Way illuminates the laborer’s working conditions, strife, life, and pay while employed within the profitable industry of early American canal building. In addition to this, Way seeks to understand the rapid transition from a pre-industrial, to a fully industrial society. In his opening chapters we learn how canal building contributed to the formation of the early American economy in terms of connecting markets and hastening transportation. However, as Way continues in his journey, he assesses the use of free and unfree

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<sup>40</sup> Montgomery, pp. 21.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

labor, the compensation of wage-earning laborers, the physical work on the canal, and the social aspects that canal labor facilitated.<sup>42</sup>

Perhaps the greatest insights from the text is an identifiable transition from old world labor conducted by slaves and indentured servants, to the industrial world governed by world markets and wage labor. Furthermore, his emphasis on who was doing the physical labor exposes a wide range of people from farmers to former Southern slaves, French-Canadian seigneuries, and Irishmen from rural areas—all to be categorized as unskilled. In short, Way shows how these workers who were traditionally the lowest rung of labor in the preindustrial world, were eventually considered the standard employees in the mid-nineteenth century. Furthermore, that what these workers experienced during the canal days, could be translated over to the new employer-employee relationship.<sup>43</sup>

### Race

Branching off from this new school of labor history, covered by Katznelson & Zolberg, Montgomery, and Way, is a line of published scholars who strove to study the finer aspects within the same field. For instance, historians such as Herbert Hill and Jacqueline Jones are two of the leading scholars in assessing racial prejudice within labor history. Indeed, with both Hill's article in the journal for *Reviews in American History*, "The Problem of Race", and Jones' book, *American Work: Four Centuries of Black and White Labor* (1998), we see this important issue of racism in labor history. Found in Hill's work is a focus on the impact of social and economic racism in trade unions, in addition to the long history which preceded these institutions.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Peter Way. *Common Labour: Workers and the Digging of North American Canals 1780-1860*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Herbert Hill. *The Problem of Race in American Labor History*. *Reviews in American History* 1996 Vol 24. No 2. pp. 189-208.

Jacqueline Jones poses a similar thesis that takes a broader approach to the way in which centuries of institutional racism evolved over time. She began her study in the 1600s and masterfully progressed up to modern times, analyzing each epoch.<sup>45</sup>

Although both of these works are focused on the racial aspects of different periods in labor history, their conclusions are strikingly similar—that racism cannot be viewed as a universal term, ideology, or behavior, since it actively alters and conforms decade to decade, in order to meet the racial needs of new generations of white men. Furthermore, it can be discerned that both historians alluded to a transformative era during and after the Civil War. They found that this period was one of profound societal upheaval, which illustrates for us today that a deliberate attempt was made to exclude African Americans from higher skill level jobs, while binding them through the values of a racist society, to the world of low paying/low skill jobs. Indeed, even after the Civil War, new forms of slavery arose and the perpetuation of ‘the superior versus the inferior’, continued.

In addition, another historian who endeavored to explore similar aspects such as the racism and economics of working-class history is Dr. Eric Arnesen, who produced many works that both focused on working-class history, and on the transformative era of the Civil War. Indeed, testaments to his contributions and involvement in the new labor school, which often featured a more social approach, can be found in “Whiteness and the Historians’ Imagination” and *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans*. Primarily, Arneson’s “Whiteness” article scrutinized the work of previous historians on their theories of whiteness. In Arnesen’s deliberation, he focused his attention on the evidence, sources, and evaluations that put forth an answer to the question of: why did white workers not align their struggles for better workplace rights,

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<sup>45</sup> Jacqueline Jones. *American Work: Four Centuries of Black and White Labor*. New York City: W.W. Norton & Company 1998.

conditions, and pay, with that of African Americans? In answering this inquiry, location, socio-economic status, and racism were the most obstructing elements for a unified cause between the two. Perhaps his most notable attack was against the notion of the ‘psychological wage’ found in David Roediger’s *Wages of Whiteness*. This term, refuted by Arnesen, attempted to explain the higher pay grade and level of employment for white workers, versus that of their black counterparts.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, in his book, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans*, Arnesen utilized his revolutionary ideas about racism in labor history to analyze the dynamics of New Orleans’ labor history. In this work, Arnesen made it abundantly clear that New Orleans stood as a city with a rich history of diversity. However, in current times Arnesen does not believe that black people are represented properly in that history of diversity. In fact, he believed that a large amount of black people’s historical contributions to the sugar and cotton industries, within the city, has gone unnoticed. Therefore, the main objective of this work was to bridge the gap between what we know about New Orleans labor history and what we do not know, or neglect, about African American contributions.<sup>47</sup> Nonetheless, both Roediger’s *Wages of Whiteness*<sup>48</sup> and Arnesen’s *Waterfront Workers*, exposed key racial aspects of labor history that do often go untold and undefined.

Finally, a few historians who served as deeper context for my study of Buffalo’s riots in 1862 and 1863, consist of Jesuit priest Leonard R. Riforgiato, Iver Bernstein, Christian Samito,

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<sup>46</sup> Eric Arnesen. *Whiteness and the Historians’ Imagination, in International Labor and Working Class History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002.

<sup>47</sup> Eric Arneson. *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics (1863-1923)*. New York: Oxford University Press 1991.

<sup>48</sup> David R Roediger. *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. New York: Verso 1991.



and Justin T. Howell. Within each of these historians' work lies a detailed analysis into topics such as Buffalo's specific impact and influence during the Civil War, civil unrest during the 1860s, large social shifts as a result of the Civil War, and the mindset of Western New York soldiers. Furthermore, with both of Bernstein's works, *The New York City Draft Riots* and *Actors and Heroes*, we obtain our first glimpse at the manner in which national divisions and immediate threats to the general public, such as the Draft, coalesced into events of urban civil unrest. However, most importantly, a major assertion extremely relevant to this study and levied by all three authors, is that the Civil War was a transformative period that vigorously shed an old social order, in favor of a new progressive one that championed America's founding principle of equality for all.

Found in the *Catholic Historical Review*, is Leonard Riforgiato's journal article from 1987, "Bishop Timon, Buffalo and the Civil War". In it, he focused entirely on the Catholic perspective in Buffalo during the Civil War, and to accomplish this, he dove into the life of Bishop John Timon. In this endeavor, Riforgiato shed light on the vast influence Bishop Timon had over nearly half of Buffalo's population, predominantly comprised of German and Irish immigrants. In the most interesting portions of his article, Riforgiato claimed that although Bishop Timon urged Buffalo's clergy to not involve themselves in the realm of politics, he himself fought in the political arena. The Bishop was known for his pro-Union efforts by ostracizing priests in seceding states for their views, and muscling Buffalo's newspaper companies to advocate support for the Union, all the while relegating Papal funds for wounded Union and Confederate troops alike, and maintaining a peace keeping narrative for Buffalo's Catholics.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Leonard R Riforgiato. "Bishop Timon, Buffalo and the Civil War." *Catholic Historical Review* 1987 Vol. 73 No.1 pp. 62-80 ushistory.org. 2019. *Irish and German Immigration*. <http://www.ushistory.org/us/25f.asp>.

One of the central questions in this article was how the Catholic clergy influenced public sentiment toward the war. Thus, much of this article focused on the background and underlying political moves of the Bishop and the Catholic Church. Lastly, this article about Bishop Timon boasted a skillful use of references and primary sources such as newspapers from 1860s Buffalo and Timon's diary, to illustrate exactly how Buffalo's Catholic clergy manipulated what people believed, read, and deemed important. But perhaps most importantly Riforgiato revealed the fact that despite the Catholic campaign of peace during wartime, Buffalo had broken out into riots in both 1862 and 1863.<sup>50</sup>

In reviewing the historian Iver Bernstein, we see him taking a focus in shedding light on the phenomenon of civil disobedience. Taking his interest further, his book *The New York City Draft Riots*, attempted to answer the question of how old America transitioned into a modern urban America. In his answer, Bernstein attempted to marry two schools of historiography in order to find a deeper understanding of American society. He felt that not much light had been shed on the New York City Draft Riot and that the event undoubtedly had a correlation with the process and growth of urban America in the late nineteenth century. In turn, his book focused on both the numerous causations of New York City's riot, and the numerous problems in the U.S. prior to 1860. He tells us that many Irish and German immigrants came to America fleeing potato famines, political revolutions, and widespread unemployment. He also asserted a projection of just how many immigrants arrived through New York Harbor during the mid-nineteenth century, claiming that nearly two million immigrated.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Iver Bernstein. *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1990.

He then broke down the various ideologies present among the rioting New Yorkers and concluded that rioters orchestrated their own demise due to their ever growing divisions and bickering amongst internal factions. All in all, Bernstein offered up an interesting notion that both Irish and German rioters sought to change their horrendous work conditions and their subjugation under the Draft, while showing another desire to increase their grip over the low-level job market. Furthermore, many of the rioters' actions reflected a violent racist ideology that motivated the gruesome killing and beating of many blacks living in New York at the time.<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, perhaps the more intriguing point made by Bernstein, in reference to the installation of the Draft, was the divisive notion of 'rich versus poor'. We can discern that certain stipulations both allowed individuals of a certain class to exempt themselves from the Draft, and caused further anger amongst lower working-class people. But more profoundly, Bernstein illuminated a purposeful intent behind the inclusion of these controversial omissions. Based on the records of Congressional debate in 1863, Bernstein asserted that members of Congress believed that paying three hundred dollars or enlisting a substitute were viable options for working-class families. Thus they included these loopholes alongside a standard of physical and mental health requirements that prevented the enlistment of disabled and frail people. However regardless of the intent to protect families, the anticipation of disposable income, and omissions for the sick and elderly, the reality of calling a Draft played out much differently as America's immigrants, unskilled workers, and healthy young men (who could not afford three-hundred-dollars) heard their names called to service. In turn, Bernstein clearly laid out the one-sided, predetermined, nature of the Draft that so often tipped the scales in favor of upper-middle and wealthy class Americans.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

Thus, we can see Bernstein's work and his case study of New York City's Draft Riots as something that provides a number of insights about the U.S. prior to and during the 1860s. It exposes that much of the working-class of 1860s New York City was made up of both German and Irish immigrants who tended to be in a constant state of struggle for job market supremacy and even social recognition. Both of these groups were ignited with the passing of oppressive legislation in 1863, which came with controversial loopholes for the upper-middle class and rich to exploit, should they meet the age or health requirements.<sup>54</sup> Also, New York City's riots to some degree set the standard for what historians categorize as a Civil War-era riot. For the events of New York reflected a combination of social outages pertaining to industrial grievances, racial supremacy, and anti-governmental sentiments. In turn, parts of this story can be seen in Buffalo's own riots of 1862 and 1863. For the riot of 1862 was touched off by striking stevedores, and the subsequent suppression by city police. While Buffalo's riot in 1863, just one week prior to the events in New York City, began with the murder of an Irishman in broad daylight at the hand of an African American, causing a race riot that targeted black tenements, dock workers, and residents.

A cautionary interpretation is offered in an articulate review by Phillip Paludan on another Bernstein book, *Actors and Heroes*, where Paludan discussed an intriguing aspect relative to working-class history —riots. In specific, Paludan comments on Iver Bernstein's perspective and thoughts about the New York City Draft Riots of 1863. He points out that Bernstein's work is representative of a new change in the way historians write history; asserting the claim that Bernstein attempted to mix the 'traditional school' with the emerging school of social history. In doing so, a certain aura of one-sidedness stood out to Paludan. In fact, Paludan

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid. (\$300, a nearly unattainable amount for even the highest paid unskilled laborer.)

asserted in his review, that Bernstein painted immoral and criminal characters of the New York City Riot in a noble light that misrepresented their true personality. Perhaps Paludan's harshest critique was that "I would feel more confident believing history that reads more like a tragedy, perhaps like irony, and less like melodrama."<sup>55</sup> This review indicates that there was still some much needed literary caution, critique, and experimentation to be done when it came to researching and writing about the violent interactions between people of various ethnic backgrounds.

Next is a look into the insightful conclusions of Christian Samito's *Becoming American Under Fire*. In his book, Samito also asserted that the Civil War was indeed a transformative era. Indeed, Samito's readers are exposed to an eye-opening phenomenon that changed American society in the nineteenth century —the evolution of who and what the 'American citizen' represented at home and abroad. In this work, Samito endeavored to shed light on Irish and African American ascension to citizenship after 1865. In doing so, he began his studies in the 1850s and focused on the historical plights of both groups, gradually moving up toward the early 1880s. It is during this diligently constructed historical narrative, that readers are enlightened to the transitional and formative period for modern American citizenship. Thus, the assertion that our modern idea of American citizenship has its roots somewhere between 1850 and 1880, is laid before the reader.<sup>56</sup>

To accomplish this task of first enlightening and then explaining the full scope of this concept of American identity and citizenship, Samito employed a number of techniques. The first of these dealt with the groups in question, Irish and African Americans. Samito made it very

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<sup>55</sup> Phillip Paludan, "Actors and Heroes. Review", *Reviews in American History*, Dec 1990, Vol 18, No. 4 pp. 493-499.

<sup>56</sup> Christian G. Samito. *Becoming American Under Fire: Irish Americans, African Americans, and the Politics of Citizenship During the Civil War Era*. Cornell: Cornell University Press 2009.

clear that although both of these groups appeared in the same book, their stories existed in separate continuums. This is done to avoid confusion amongst readers, who may contrive the notion that somehow Irish and African Americans were in league for the same social equality. In fact, Samito explicitly says that although these groups existed, struggled, and earned societal equality during the same time frame, key differences separated them and their movements.<sup>57</sup>

Besides the obvious fact that these groups represented two different races, the struggles and goals of African Americans differed greatly from that of Irish Americans. For instance, African Americans sought a distinction as citizens through freedom, naturalization, and equality at home. In turn, these ambitions were partially achieved with the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments. However, Irish Americans principally sought to both separate themselves from the ‘foreigner’ stereotype that characterized their people, and desired naturalization as American citizens, even if they were not born state side. Moreover, Samito pointed out that the Irish were caught up in an international debate outlined by British policies that forbade any native Briton to defect to another nation. This interpretation signified that when Irish Americans went home to visit their family, they faced the risk of being kept there under British law. In turn, the more American they could become the easier their<sup>58</sup>

However, aside from these differences, Samito pointed to two commonalities between both groups. These were service in the military and the constant association with the founding fathers after the war. In fact, Samito says that both actions served as a common avenue for Irish and African Americans in their struggle for equality and recognition as American citizens. Samito declared that many Americans could not simply ignore the bloodshed and bravery of Irish and African Americans, which were displayed on the battlefield. And that to ignore the

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

efforts and sacrifices of both groups would simply be un-American in a time of great patriotism. For African Americans, rifles, uniforms, and pay, which came with service in the Union army, allowed them to identify with the U.S. on a positive note for the first time, resulting in a strong military culture and tradition within the African American community lasting long after the Civil War.<sup>59</sup>

Additionally, Irish Americans created their own military tradition through bravery and bloodshed at battles like Antietam, Bull Run, and Gettysburg. With their hand in major battles Irishmen were able to shed their social identity as immigrants from a foreign country, and become Americans. Lastly, Samito placed great emphasis on the notion that both groups effectively exploited American traditions for their greater benefit. He also pointed out that during Reconstruction, both groups asserted their claim to full American citizenship by declaring that they had fought for preservation of the Constitution, Bill of Rights, and the Union, just as the founding fathers did in the Revolution.<sup>60</sup>

Therefore, with Samito's analysis of this phenomenon in American history, we realize for ourselves that American history, especially before and after the Civil War, contains hidden turning points, which allow us in modern times to better understand why and how our society has become what it has today. Therefore, Samito's conception of American citizenship parallels with several other hidden phenomena crucial to the formation of modern America —one being that of civil disobedience in 1860s America, which I explore further in this study. Furthermore, later in this study I utilize the experiences of Buffalo New York's Irish, German, African American, and Anglo-protestant communities to show how and why prominent Northern cities like Buffalo, erupted into not just one, but two chaotic riots. In addition to this in-depth analysis of 1860s

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

Buffalo, I dive into other Northern cities with the goal to compare and contrast the reasoning, levels of violence, and aftermaths of each. With a method of chronological contrast and comparison, I pose the notion of America as a ‘melting pot’ was in part born out of the fires and destruction of several Northern cities between 1861 and 1865.

Lastly, another major source that contributed to the formation of my historiography pertaining specifically to Buffalo during the Civil War, came from a SUNY Buffalo State alumnus, Justin T. Howell. Found in his M.A. thesis from 2012 titled, “Motivations of the Civil War Soldiers from Western New York” Howell examined the great question of why men from Western New York joined the Union army. He conducted his investigation into this topic by reading hundreds of letters written by soldiers from Western New York. He concluded that many of them were inspired by “initial motivations” and later, “sustaining motivations”. Looking closer, Howell’s “initial motives” referred to the thrill of adventure and combat, as well as resentment for Southern rebels. By contrast, his “sustaining motives” referred to a sense of patriotic duty to the Union, the desire to uphold family honor, an abolitionist desire to fight slavery, and the soldier’s dedication to fight alongside their neighbors and family whom they did not want to abandon. Howell concluded his studies by analyzing how these Western New York soldiers adjusted back into society in the aftermath. Overall Howell’s assessment was skillful in analyzing who Western New York soldiers were, why they fought, and what other forces played a role in influencing men to fight.<sup>61</sup>

As for my own addition to the historical literature; aside from what this study may reveal about both certain sub-disciplines and Civil War history, perhaps this work will have its greatest impact in the realm of Buffalo history. For, I have found there to be little to no published writing

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<sup>61</sup> Justin T. Howell. “Motivations of Civil War Soldiers from Western New York” (2012). *History Theses*. Paper 11.



or research on Buffalo's riots or role during the Civil War. Furthermore, in respect to the history of civil unrest in the U.S. during that time frame, it seems that most of any researcher's attention has been drawn to the New York City Draft Riots of 1863. This is quite obvious when one tries to locate any information about any other riot from the same decade. It is simply impossible. Although New York City's riots were significant and very telling of public sentiment during the Civil War, the event garners a tremendous amount of scholarly focus which otherwise could be used to unravel the under-researched phenomenon of Northern urban unrest during the Civil War. Indeed, this is where I intend to make my greatest impact. I intend to fully assess and render an accurate measure of exactly what was occurring to America's great Northern industrial cities between 1861 and 1865. In this endeavor, special attention will be paid to the events themselves —specifically looking at social grievances, flash points, violent actions, outcomes and wider impacts pertaining to seven considerably violent riots that afflicted urban dwellers of the North during the U.S. Civil War.

## CHAPTER 2

*Issues & Events Relative  
to  
Unrest in the 1860s*

## Introduction

In chapter one a lengthy discussion about what recent scholarly works have discovered and concluded about immigration, labor dynamics, and racial discrimination, have composed a picture of nineteenth century America that appears poised and ready for a violent climax. And in short it was. However, for the purposes of this study and its focus on civil unrest during the 1860s and in Buffalo, this chapter will serve to add a small number of particularly striking factors and events, not discussed by the authors of chapter one, into the conversation. These new elements will provide a deeper understanding as to what directed and occupied the minds of riotous nineteenth century Americans. In fact, what will become apparent via the topics of this section, is that two trying social questions and one piece of legislation did more to stoke the flames of unrest in the 1860s than anything else. Likewise, a dive into two violent riots in 1844 and 1855, will serve as noteworthy precursors to unrest seen during the 1860s; exposing specific dynamics behind ethnic friction, the heights to which violence could rise, and nineteenth century law enforcement's struggle to combat unrest.

Among the social questions under review in the upcoming chapter, will be that of the commonly known slavery and immigration questions. Indeed, the manner in which the issue of slavery was handled both politically and socially are universally seen as the contributing factors to the divisiveness that drove the U.S. to war in 1861. While the immigration question, and the social reactions to it, will largely come to represent the growing friction within American communities themselves. Mostly in the North, both religious and ethnic feuds will pit neighbor on neighbor, as brawls, shootouts, and nativists plague two of America's most prominent cities—Philadelphia (1844) and Cincinnati (1855). In turn, the dissection of these events will offer a

rare insight into precedential events of intrigue as they relate to the unrest seen later on in Buffalo and other areas of the North during the 1860s.

Finally, this chapter will cover the immense contribution and impact rendered by the institution of the Enrollment Act of 1863. For regardless of what the implementation of a draft can tell us about the war effort, competence of Union generals, the effectiveness of Southern armies, or other logistical intrigues, this single piece of legislation will serve as the tipping point for those committing unrest in urban centers of the North. For example, out of the total nine outbursts of civil unrest that will appear in chapter three (during the 1860s), six of them occurred particularly after March 1863. Thus, in this section a purely social assessment concentrated on two of the century's greatest social questions, two telling riots in 1844 and 1855, and intolerant stipulations found in the Draft of 1863, will serve to identify both precursors to and major contributors behind what was essentially a phenomenon of popular civil disorder during the 1860s.

## The Slavery Question — “the wolf by the ear”

Connected to both the vote for succession in 1861 and the racially charged unrest seen during the 1860s, the slavery question was undeniably a major factor in what occupied the minds of nineteenth century Americans. For decades (before 1860) it had dominated both the political process of the nation and the entire economy of the South; it had existed as a perpetual issue from which Americans living as early as the 1820s became divided, in time creating two separate societies. Nonetheless, this controversy can be traced all the way back to the founding fathers. For even those who led the revolution with both pen and sword, had trouble conceptualizing the language in our Declaration of Independence and as well as in that of our Constitution. Both of these documents stated that all men were created equal, although the founding fathers knew very well, and often first hand, that a large portion of the population were enslaved and not free whatsoever.

Nonetheless, a quote from Thomas Jefferson in 1820 demarcates the first major turning point in what would quickly rise to prominence as one of America’s most divisive issues. Representing a perspective shared amongst a growing majority of Americans in his time, Jefferson wrote, “but, as it is, we have the wolf by the ear, and we can neither hold him nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other.”<sup>62</sup> As one may discern, Jefferson’s greatest impact in this quote was the recognition that an injustice was being done to Africans. However, Jefferson affirms slavery’s connection to the economic success of the country, describing retention of the institution as ‘self-preservation’. Thus, this quote allows us to view exactly how Americans of the early nineteenth century saw both slavery and the issues surrounding the idea of emancipation.

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<sup>62</sup> Thomas Jefferson. "Letter to John Holmes." April 22, 1820.

However, this long struggle would reach its first climax in that same year (1820) in what is known as the Missouri Compromise of 1820. In a brief sense, the principal issues behind the Missouri Compromise were based in the previous Three-Fifths Compromise of 1787. The 1787 Compromise tells us that in the process of counting and assigning seats in the House of Representatives, slave states would be allowed to increase their representation by accounting for their slaves as three-fifths additional votes. More slaves equaled more votes, and thus won greater representation for both slave owners and the states they operated in. The issue of 1820 came to a head as a new state, Missouri, applied for statehood as a slave holding state. With this new application, politicians foresaw the future of American politics as a crippled, one-sided system.

Indeed, this was warranted as the number of free and slave states in 1820 reflected a delicate balance of representation, consisting of eleven free states and eleven slave states. However, one could easily articulate the likelihood with which this system would be thrown out of balance; especially as Americans tamed the West and as more states applied for statehood. Nonetheless, Henry Clay's compromise settled this controversy with terms that allowed for Northern state, Maine, to become a free state so that newcomer, Missouri, could be admitted as a slave state. In addition to this, Clay negotiated that the remainder of the Louisiana Territory North of the 36' 30' parallel, would unconditionally remain free non-slave holding regions.<sup>63</sup>

Perhaps the next major rise in this grand political debate that occupied the minds of many Americans, can be expressed in the clash over a Congressional Gag Rule<sup>64</sup>. According to this peculiar rule, we see a consensus in the House of Representatives for the blockage of anti-slavery

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<sup>63</sup> Robert P. Forbes. *The Missouri Compromise and Its Aftermath: Slavery and the Meaning of America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007, pp. 33-69.

<sup>64</sup> Gag Rule- a Congressional order denying discussion about a controversial and stifling topic.

petitions that appeared frequently, and with as many as two million signatures. The origins of this controversial rule stemmed from those who produced such lengthy petitions, specifically the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS). Founded in 1833 by William Lloyd Garrison and Arthur Tappan, the AASS had both black and white members whose sole mission was to pressure Congress into abolishing the institution of slavery. But rather than debate or discuss abolition and its potential recourses, members in the House of Representatives passed a Gag Rule in 1836 after three years of immense pressure. This new rule barred the topic of slavery from official Congressional discussion. As a result, the members of the House drew heavy scrutiny from the abolitionist community in league with the AASS, who actively pushed the issue through newspaper columns that eventually garnered popular support in the House. In turn, by 1844 the AASS succeeded in pressuring a vote to repeal the Gag Rule. But more profoundly, the Gag Rule serves this study's purpose to demonstrate what directed and occupied the minds of riotous nineteenth century Americans, as the entire controversy definitively signifies that millions of Americans between 1836 and 1844, have come to offer their attention, signatures, and approval in a debate that would soon implode the young republic.<sup>65</sup>

The next great political clash over slavery that certainly captured the public's attention as well, came six years later in 1850 when a divisive issue circumvented in 1820 arose once more. Indeed, the controversy over whether new states should be admitted as free or slave-holding states revisited American politics. Stoked by the massive territorial gains conceded through victory at the end of the Mexican-American War (1848), Americans of the 1850s grew divided in their vision for what these massive territories would come to represent. On one side, abolitionists advocated for the U.S. to abide by its fundamental principles of freedom and equality, by halting

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<sup>65</sup> William Lee Miller. "Shut the Door in Their Face." In *Arguing About Slavery: The Great Battle in the United States Congress*. New York City: Alfred A. Knopf INC, 1996. pp 139-153.

the westward expansion of slave states. While those in opposition maintained the belief that slavery should be allowed to expand without hindrance, equating the institution to an individual's right to free enterprise.

Nevertheless, aside from an initial administrative move to demarcate a firm Texan border and create the Utah and New Mexico Territories, the final draft of the compromise came to signify a social clash revealing the volatility behind the fight to appease Americans on both sides of the slavery question. This notion is evident based on stipulations found in the five bills that comprised the 1850 Compromise. These bills served to reflect and satisfy both abolitionist and pro-slavery desires. Among the abolitionist portions of the Compromise were two bills. One of them mandated that California would enter the Union as a free state, thus eliminating it from any future controversy. The other, abolished slavery within the nation's capital, the District of Columbia. In contrast, contained in the pro-slavery portion of the Compromise was a new Fugitive Slave Act that gave slavecatchers the power to bring even freed black men back into slavery. However, both sides would come together over the implementation of popular sovereignty<sup>66</sup> within the newly created territories. Indeed, popular sovereignty in this instance would be the deciding factor in whether or not the applying state would be accepted under the title of a free or slaveholding state. This was a relatively clever piece of legislation as it left the issue unsolved, with the potential for both sides to achieve their respective goals. For, instead of allowing politicians to represent their people in Washington D.C., the Compromise would call upon residents of a prospective state to represent themselves by way of a general election.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> \**Popular Sovereignty*- referred to a general election amongst residents of a prospective state. Different than the use of representatives in the House or Senate.

<sup>67</sup> Holman Hamilton. *Prologue to Conflict: The Crisis and Compromise of 1850*. Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1964. pp 166-180.



In the aftermath of this struggle, sectionalism was clearly established and demarcated. For instance, in its wake the Great Compromise allowed for America's politicians to achieve a truly remarkable feat. For beyond 1850, the slavery question was virtually concluded. Unless an applying state could win popular sovereignty, then slave holding societies were to be exclusively restricted to eleven Southern states. But no matter the amount of effort, stipulations, or compromises, this same issue burst back onto the political scene with a vengeance in 1854 — specifically in two pivotal events that placed the U.S. on the warpath, the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 and Bleeding Kansas. The latter causing the first large-scale bloodshed over the slavery question.<sup>68</sup>

The origins behind the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, began in the 1840s when a large territory North of modern day Texas and Oklahoma began to attract settlers of a commercial background. Indeed, people came to Kansas with the hopes of establishing commercial centers dependent upon a railroad depot connecting the territory with markets in cities like New Orleans and Chicago. Politically, this territory became an intriguing subject as the question of slavery came to bear. Although the territory atoned to the 36° 30' Southern border of Missouri rule, many insisted that since Kansas was not officially ceded in the purchase of the Louisiana Territories back in 1803, stipulations enforced under the Missouri Compromise did not apply to it. Equally concerning, Kansas was not legally restricted by the Compromise of 1850 since its location was more Midwest.

The divisive nature behind this 'grey area' touched off when leaders of the region sought statehood with the United States. As Congress worked to make sense of the mind-boggling position of this territory, more and more people began to focus on the future status of slavery in

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<sup>68</sup> "Timeline of Compromises Over Slavery." *Herb Social History for Every Classroom*. <https://herb.ashp.cuny.edu/items/show/1286>.

Kansas; particularly discussing if slavery in the region would be in accordance with previous compromises. In turn, a bill was proposed to Congress in 1853 for the repeal of the Missouri Compromise in order to reorganize the Kansas-Nebraska Territory. However, this proposed reorganization came with a mandatory vote of popular sovereignty to determine whether or not Kansas would be admitted into the Union as a free or slaveholding state. Thus after much deliberation, on May 30, 1854 the Kansas-Nebraska Act passed with stiff opposition in the House and widespread acceptance in the Senate. As a result, both abolitionist and pro-slavery factions flooded into the future state of Kansas with the intent of swaying the vote in their favor.<sup>69</sup>

It was this exact migration of opposing camps that quickly sparked a bloody six years of skirmishes between opposing factions that came to be known as, Free-Staters and Border-Ruffians. In this lesser known story, the facilitating act of violence initiating the wider conflict, began in Douglas County, Kansas in November of 1855, when a Ruffian named Franklin Coleman shot and killed a Free-Stater named Charles Dow. In the aftermath, the Douglas County Sheriff chose to charge other Free-Staters with the murder, rather than the actual murderer. In light of this blatant abuse of power, an armed posse of Free-Staters forcefully sprung their fellow abolitionists from their holding cell. In response, pro-slavery governor Wilson Shannon, called upon the territory's Militia to suppress the Free-Staters. However, the Militia was comprised of pro-slavery-minded soldiers who only perpetuated a blood feud with their Free Soil counterparts. Therefore, until Kansas was admitted as a free state in 1861, bleeding Kansas would come to be

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<sup>69</sup> Nicole Etcheson. "Where Popular Sovereignty Worked: Nebraska Territory and the Kansas-Nebraska Act." In *The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854*. by John R. Wunder & Joann M. Ross. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008. pp 159-182.

known for savage raids, illegitimate elections, bloody vendettas, and social upheaval.<sup>70</sup> All of these events encouraged and fostered sectional hatred amongst Americans themselves, ultimately leading to the Civil War.

In turn, what needs to be emphasized from this particular social question and the many flashpoints between 1820 and 1861, was the formation and spread of hatred. Whether in opposing political parties, the open fields of Kansas, or in North-South sectionalism, a growing hatred amongst Americans with opposing views, spawned by the slavery question, was destined to stunt and implode the U.S. politically and socially. For across the antebellum period, social divisions over this issue even led to the creation of two wildly different economies and societies in both the North and South. But perhaps most important of all, a derogatory stance surrounding the status of black people was growing. As surprising as it may sound after recounting the struggles to restrict, corner, and outright end the institution of slavery, many Americans of the late nineteenth century still clung to a socially acceptable level of racial discrimination. For regardless of abolitionist efforts throughout the century and a looming war on the horizon based in the issue of slavery, whites (even in the North) still adhered to the tenets of a racially organized society. For instance, even freed blacks were not afforded equal civil rights, many of them still faced blatant discrimination in public spaces, and most relative to this study, blacks faced an actively resistant job market that sought to either exclude or exploit them.

Indeed, what becomes apparent about Northern society during the 1860s in particular, were that ideas once held dearly by great Northern abolitionists were not reinforced in reality. Even when slaves won their freedom through Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation (1863), they were met with open resistance in Northern cities by poor white immigrants from Germany and

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<sup>70</sup> Etcheson, 182-190.

Ireland. Thus this study reveals a conflict in labor between immigrant communities and newly freed blacks, as each group vied for their own share in the unskilled job market. However, these racially based labor frictions progressed into something worse as immigrants received their call to military service in 1863. Indeed, as the Draft was called in cities across the North, recruiting mainly immigrants, many poor whites began to scapegoat blacks as the root problem relative to specific hardships. For in their minds, blacks were to blame for both white labor strife and conscription into perilous military service. In turn, as this study moves away from the social perspectives and impacts related to the slavery question, the perspective of poor white immigrants, in combination with the nativists who opposed them, will be shared in the upcoming section about the equally divisive issue pertaining to immigration; an issue so zealously debated and fought over during the nineteenth century.

## The Issue of Immigration: Negative Social Reactions

As Americans fought battles to exact manifest destiny and to circumvent the issue of slavery, another issue was coalescing in America's prominent urban centers. This emerging issue came to be centered around the perceived social and cultural depreciation that millions of immigrating German and Irish families had on American society. Now, of course today the topic of immigration is met with a number of receptive ideas and plans, but from 1820 to 1860 the notion that millions of people were immigrating to the U.S., became associated with a real force that could destroy the American way of life. In turn, to grasp the full context of how this threat directed and occupied the minds of riotous nineteenth century Americans, we must open ourselves up to the logic that portrayed and conjured 'the immigrant' as an impending threat. However, to understand how a socially constructed threat relates to the physical violence captured in both Philadelphia's (1844) and Cincinnati's Nativist Riots (1855), we need a preliminary dive into the facts surrounding immigration in Antebellum America. This means that we must define and uncover both statistical data as well as environmental reasons, that influenced millions of people, specifically Irish and Germans, to emigrate to America. Lastly, an understanding from a nativist's perspective will set the stage for the chaotic events of 1844 and 1855.

As briefly revealed in chapter one, between 1820 and 1860, U.S. census records tell us that nearly four and a half million Irishmen, along with one and a half million Germans, emigrated to the U.S..<sup>71</sup> Most of them were fleeing from economic, political, and civil unrest in their respective home countries. Nonetheless, similar to immigrants of today, these millions of Europeans came to America for a better life based on merit, the power of free will, and personal

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<sup>71</sup> Ryan W. Keating. "Immigrants in the Union Army." *Essential Civil War Curriculum*. San Bernardino, California State University, 2004. pp. 2.

ingenuity. However, for the purposes of this study, it should be mentioned that although many other ethnicities made the same journey, it was the Irish and Germans who came in the highest numbers. And, it would be these same two groups that make the greatest number of appearances in many instances of late nineteenth century unrest, including those incidents seen in Buffalo, New York.

In assessing the factors facilitating an Irish flight to America, the devastating Potato Famine (1847 to 1852) in combination with the unrest that followed, stand as the principal forces that drove millions of Irish from their homeland. Indeed, this crop failure irreversibly changed the fabric and future of Ireland as a sort of 'Irish diaspora' began to unfold. Irish society had always been centered around agriculture, with the potato serving a dual purpose as both a cash crop and central ingredient to the Irish peoples' diet. However, when the famine hit, many farmers could no longer support themselves or their families, and as a result, over one million people starved to death and around four and a half million emigrated to the United States.<sup>72</sup>

Aside from the Potato Famine, another factor that drove the Irish from their homeland was their lawful exclusion from British politics. The origins of this exclusion can be attributed to a medieval religious intolerance. The Irish had always been a devoutly Catholic people since the middle ages, but when Henry Tudor VIII broke with Rome in 1534 and created the Church of England, Catholics became the minority and Protestants became the favored majority. As a result, over just a few centuries (beyond 1534) later, Irish Catholics found themselves systemically condemned as suspicious and treasonous, spited with zero representation in Parliament.<sup>73</sup> In turn, by the mid-nineteenth century, this stigma and hate for Catholics became

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<sup>72</sup> Keating, 2.

<sup>73</sup> Andrew Pettegree. "The English Reformation." *BBC*. Feb 17, 2011.  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/tudors/english\\_reformation\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/tudors/english_reformation_01.shtml).

synonymous with hate for Irish culture by the English, thus adding another layer onto their desire to emigrate to America.

For the Germans, a very different story unfolded as they emigrated to the United States with larger family fortunes and marketable experience in several forms of skilled labor. Nonetheless, much of their history prior to 1860 saw the common people put into a state of subjugation or militaristic peril. All of these negative elements truly stem from the fact that Germany was not unified into a contiguous land mass. Instead, prior to 1800, Germany as we know it today, was a patchwork of rival duchies and principalities that often fought each other over religious and territorial pretenses. Likewise, much of Germany (similar to England) broke from Catholicism over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, creating a social divide amongst Germans based on their religious beliefs. Again, similar to England's Catholics, German Catholics became the minority and often suffered for it through legal oppression or war with neighboring Protestants.<sup>74</sup>

However, this constant struggle back and forth was trumped at the start of the 1800s by Napoleon, and his ambitions to spread the ideals of the French Revolution to all of Europe via his military genius. Needless to say, his campaigns across Europe irreversibly changed the fabric of both European and especially German society. These changes that came out of the Napoleonic-era can be seen in many areas of European society, but central to the reasoning behind German emigration to the United States are the legal systems left behind in the wake of his defeat (1815). Once Napoleon was defeated, a conservative style of governance took form in Prussia, a style that advocated the king's absolute power over all state affairs. This system actually worked for a short period of time, but only with the concession of minor legislative

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<sup>74</sup> Keating, 1-4.

powers to local town and village councils. These minor concessions of authority quelled tempers in the short term, but eventually the tease of greater autonomy caused the middle class to explode in 1848—a year that saw widespread international revolutions in protest of absolute monarchs and corrupt governments.<sup>75</sup>

As a result, many common Germans had a desire to escape this historical and seemingly endless cycle of social instability. Many Germans began to look toward the U.S. as the land of opportunity and freedom, where they could live and enjoy what Germany could not give them. As mentioned in “Immigrants of the Union Army” by Ryan Keating, many Germans saw democracy as something that could unite Germany, but also as something too difficult to bring to fruition inside its boundaries. In turn, many families simply packed up and moved to the U.S., where democracy was said to be doing well.<sup>76</sup>

Lastly, we come to another group so important, yet underrepresented in the broader discussion of dynamics relative to the immigration question in Antebellum America—the nativists. Nativists can be defined as a group of both rich and poor, Protestant Anglo-Americans, whose family can trace their American lineage back at least two generations. Aside from their prestigious lineage, nativists can also be identified with those in the later Know Nothing Party. This group of ‘homegrown’ activists emerged as a reactionary force to combat the millions of Catholic immigrants who began to settle in prominent industrial cities. The group saw a noble and religious cause in fighting to preserve the racial and ethnic fabric of what they believed America ought to be. They advocated for tactics like violence, tough and restrictive legislation, religious conversion of Catholics, and resistance to immigrant assimilation.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Michael Rapport. 2008. *1848: Year of Revolution*. New York City: Basic Books.

<sup>76</sup> Keating, 7-10.

<sup>77</sup> John Higham. *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press 1955. pp. 87-97.



We can catch a brief glimpse of this group, their beliefs, and how they relate to Buffalo's story through a section in David Gerber's *Making of an American Pluralism*, where he details nativist viewpoints on the Irish. He tells us that the Irish were seen as a sort of secondary citizenry—that they were seen as an alien culture, entirely opposite from American principles. Gerber alludes to the notion that the Irish were segregated in a number of ways ranging from residential zoning to outright prejudice in religious and civic circles. The principal grievances nativists had with the Irish centered around their belief in Catholicism, love for alcohol, and their seemingly habitual tendency to instigate street fights. However, it should be noted that for as many people who held negative views of the Irish, there were an equal number of those who felt compassion and empathy for the Irish struggle. For Gerber also notes that some employers operating in the industrial sections of Buffalo, gave their Irish workers higher wages, backed financial groups that sent money to their famine afflicted families back home, and advocated for higher admiration of Irishmen as a whole in Buffalo's newspapers.<sup>78</sup>

Therefore, in conjunction with this brief iteration on the struggles, aspirations, and perspectives relative to Irish, German, and nativist Americans living during the nineteenth century, this study moves to cover the physical violence directly related to, and derived from, the public's reaction to what was perceived as an immigration crisis. In turn, both the Philadelphia Nativist Riots of 1844 and the Cincinnati Nativist Riots of 1855, will be shared in an effort to capture both the German and Irish experience, the social grievances (both nativist and immigrant) perceived to be worth fighting for, and the earliest scenes of what modern urban unrest could do to a city.

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<sup>78</sup> David Gerber. *The Making of An American Pluralism: Buffalo, New York 1825-60*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989. pp 130-138.

## Philadelphia 1844

Between May 6<sup>th</sup> and July 7, 1844, mobs of nativists, Irish immigrants, and State Militiamen clashed on the streets of Philadelphia —specifically in the adjacent districts of Kensington and Southwark. These groups clashed in frenzied violence to determine the social supremacy of either the Catholic or Protestant Bible. As noted in Kenneth Milano’s book, *The Philadelphia Nativist Riots*, the origins of this conflict emerged as the number of Catholics residing in the Philadelphia area grew from 1,500 in 1783, to over 100,000 by 1844. Along with this exponential increase in Catholic residents, many of them Irish immigrants, a social divide grew to physically shape Philadelphia as Protestant Americans began to take issue with Irish and Catholic culture. An initial symbol of resistance to this socio-religious issue, can be seen in an 1834 decision to create the Pennsylvanian Public School System. Within this institution, education would be afforded all children, it would be free, and it would allow for daily readings from the Bible. Although this religious contingency was meant to curb the influence of Catholicism, it did not specify what version of the Bible had to be read. Therefore, in 1838 the Pennsylvania State Legislature made it abundantly clear in a new law, stating that all public schools were required to read only from the King James Bible.<sup>79</sup>

This legislation faced massive Catholic backlash in newspapers, pamphlets, and sermons, as the focus closed in on the state’s blatant restriction of religious freedoms. This pushback is often characterized by an 1842 incident in which a Catholic school teacher in Southwark, Pennsylvania, refused to read the King James Bible to his students. Therefore, as a result of mounting pressure from multiple Catholic media outlets and outright insubordination from staff members, the Pennsylvania School Board passed legislation that allowed for Catholic students to

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<sup>79</sup> Kenneth Milano. *The Philadelphia Nativist Riots: Irish Kensington Erupts*, Philadelphia: The History Press, 2013. pp. 38-47.

read from the more tolerable Douay-Rheims version of the Bible. Over the next two years, Protestants and Catholics clashed ideologically in the city of Philadelphia and its surrounding localities. In the process of combating one another's influence, the Protestants utilized the power of the media to fuse their cause with the noble idea of preserving American culture and way of life. This message was both nationalistic and religious; appealing to many average Protestant residents in the city. Soon new associations like the American Protestant Association (APA) and its sister group, the American Republican Association (ARA) had consolidated power as the radical opposition to any and all Catholic immigrants. Thus, by 1844 the stage had been set for violent civil unrest toward the Catholic Irish population in the general Philadelphia area.<sup>80</sup>

Indeed, unrest came on May 3<sup>rd</sup> when Lewis Levin, a prominent nativist and future Congressman, attempted to lead a rally in the Kensington District. In short, Levin and his attendees were quickly rejected and driven out with physical force by the Catholic Irish community. When Levin and his nativists attempted another rally on May 6<sup>th</sup>, they were once again stopped by a Catholic outcry, bricks, and gunfire, all within the first speech. Although few nativists had been injured by the bricks, two of them had been killed by the exchange of gunfire. Most notably, was George Shifler, an 18-year-old dresser's apprentice and a well-known nativist. Upon his death, on May 6<sup>th</sup> Shifler was firmly canonized as a nativist martyr, and was soon used to rouse many non-participating residents in the city to the nativist cause. Following this dramatic incident, Levin on the 7<sup>th</sup> led a nativist march in honor of Shifler. Nonetheless, as nativists marched peacefully, Catholics attacked again devolving the entire day into sporadic shootings, large street fights, the burning of over thirty properties, and the death of one Catholic, Joseph Rice. The outcome of the violence on May 7<sup>th</sup> was decided by the intervention of the

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

State Militia under the command of General George Cadwalader. Cadwalader's Militia successfully quelled the violence between both nativists and Catholics, and order was briefly restored in the city.<sup>81</sup>

However, violence would surpass that on the 7<sup>th</sup> when on the very next day Levin organized two more rallies —a small one in the Kensington District, and a much larger one in Independence Square, the heart of Philadelphia. The men gathered in Independence Square proved to inflict the most damage of the day, as they proceeded from the square into Catholic sections of the city. As nativists rampaged through these areas they targeted Catholic churches, Catholic-owned businesses, market squares, and Catholics themselves, leaving over fifty properties burned and twelve Catholics dead. As done on the previous day, the State Militia intervened and again successfully subdued both nativists and Catholics alike.<sup>82</sup>

Nonetheless, after two months of martial law, rumors began to circulate in July. These rumors told that the Catholic congregation belonging to The Church of Saint Philip Neri, was stockpiling weapons for a July 4<sup>th</sup> offensive. The reality was that leaders of the Church believed that a nativist attack was likely to come during July 4<sup>th</sup> celebrations, and that the formation of a small company and arsenal for protection, was necessary. These were much needed provisions that even won approval and sponsorship by the Pennsylvania Governor, David Porter.<sup>83</sup>

However, on July 4<sup>th</sup> there was no account of nativist violence toward Catholics, but a few on looking nativists attending the day's festivities, witnessed members of the church of Saint Philip Neri, moving dozens of muskets into their house of worship; needless to say the fires were stoked for a resurgence in violent unrest. Thus, on July 5<sup>th</sup>, a large crowd of nativists gathered

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<sup>81</sup> Milano, 62-112

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

outside the Catholic church, and demanded the local Sheriff search and confiscate any weapons found on church grounds. The Sheriff obliged, and was publically seen confiscating twelve muskets. However, when the Sheriff boasted his discovery and ordered the mob to disperse, they did not. Instead, the mob of several hundred people called for a second search of the church. What followed next was a joint search effort comprised of seventeen nativists, led by the Sheriff, into the church. In this second round, the posse found three armed men, 53 muskets, 10 pistols, a keg of gun powder, and ammunition. But, instead of knowingly stoking the fires of civil unrest, the Sheriff prolonged the removal of the armaments, and made the decision to keep both the search party and weapons inside the church until nighttime. As midnight struck, the mob had dispersed and local officials, with their nativist allies, peaceably removed the weapons —chaos had been averted.<sup>84</sup>

The next day however on July 6<sup>th</sup>, another mob of nativists gathered in front of the church for a second time and demanded to see the results of the Sheriff's second search from the previous day. At this point the State Militia under General Cadwalader, had received orders to erect defenses and protect the church. As the mob shouted and demanded, state and local officials gave them no credence. In turn, the mob's response came in the form of flying rocks and other projectiles throughout the day. Fighting soon became so intense that General Cadwalader ordered one of his cannons to fire into the crowd. It was at this point a future Congressman of Pennsylvania, Charles Naylor, in league with the local Sheriff, sabotaged the cannon to prevent its firing. In turn, much to his dissatisfaction, the cannon did not fire and General Cadwalader had Charles Naylor placed under arrest inside the church. In turn, when the dust settled that same night several city Aldermen headed by the Sheriff, abandoned the defense

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<sup>84</sup> Milano, 112-122.

of the church. The group laid their justifications at the feet of both General Cadwalader's willingness to exert an excessive use of force on the public and his decision to arrest those who stood in opposition.

On the following day July 7<sup>th</sup>, the last episode of violent unrest came when a uniquely Philadelphian mob comprised of nativists, average Philadelphia residents, city Aldermen, and the local Sheriff, moved toward the State Militia defending the church. They expressed two demands aimed at freeing Charles Naylor and coercing the Militia to leave voluntarily. And, after a short time, the demand to free Naylor was met, however the Militia refused to leave. In turn, the Sheriff and his mob launched a grand offensive against the Militiamen. In the process, the mob utilized firearms, cannons, and their superiority in numbers to effectuate a level of shocking firepower. But, although the mob blew gaping holes in the structure, Cadwalader's Militia fought them valiantly and held them off. Later in the day however, when the mob broke through and made entry into the church, they were met with volley after volley by disciplined Militiamen. In turn, the mob retreated and began negotiating a truce with the defending troops. As the State Militia came to a truce and agreed to withdraw, they were pelted with rocks and other items; facilitating several brief skirmishes in the middle of the street. Later that night, fighting intensified again as thousands of State troops entered the area with orders to clear the streets and restore order. Once again widespread exchanges of gunfire, cannon blasts, and street fighting between the State Militia and the mob, could be heard throughout the night and into the morning of July 8<sup>th</sup>, as the Militia emerged victorious. In the end, over 5,000 State Militia were deployed, hundreds of businesses and homes were burned, and some 100 Philadelphians had died.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

Some of the hard lessons produced in this conflict centered around the dire need to have professional police departments patrolling the streets. With a professional police force in place, city leaders realized they could avoid the bloodshed brought on by calling out the State Militia. Examples of this realization can be seen in pieces of legislation like an 1844 City Ordinance that allocated one regiment of infantry, one battalion of artillery, and one full regiment of cavalry as a temporary force to preserve order in the city. However, more permanent legislation came into effect in 1845 when the Pennsylvania General Assembly required that all districts surrounding Philadelphia, maintain a police force with a ratio of one officer to every one hundred and fifty tax payers. Lastly, the final act of police reform was passed six years later in 1850, giving the Philadelphia Police greater jurisdiction in surrounding districts.<sup>86</sup>

However, when it comes to defining the unique place and impact of Philadelphia's Nativist Riots within the history of America's civil unrest, we come to recognize fundamental changes in the identity, grievances, and actions of the rioters. Furthermore, this event presents a picture of law enforcement's greater ability to control unruly mobs. This new ability is characterized by an efficient deployment of law enforcement entities, communal ties that deescalate tense situations, and officer discretion. Beginning with the identity of the rioters, we notice from this heavily detailed account, that the primary factions involved in this conflict were Protestant Americans and Catholic Irish immigrants. This fact speaks to the notion that civil unrest by 1844 had become something entirely different than what Americans saw in instances like Shay's Rebellion. For instance, Shay's Rebellion was about preventing governmental oppression via taxation. While Philadelphia's riots were entirely about preserving an older notion of the 'American way of life' —an Anglo-Protestant dominant society. In fact, it is in each

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

cause's foundational motives that we can discern that Americans living in urban centers, were predominately concerned with the future impact that foreign assimilation into American society would have. Thus, in this brief rendering it can be said that between 1787 and 1844, the U.S.'s societal values shifted from combating the threat of governmental oppression, to combating the dilution of America's religious and ethnic purity—an issue that derived from the settlement and presence of millions of immigrants from Ireland and Germany.

In addition to a new demographic of rioters, came new grievances and dynamic forms of action. As reflected in the account of Philadelphia's Riots, we see that at the core of both nativist and Catholic grievances was the desire to retain their native culture, pride, and religion. And, although both groups would ultimately succumb to violence to retain that cultural identity, the uniquely American belief of effectuating change from within the system, shines through. Consider the legislative decisions made by the State of Pennsylvania between 1834 and 1842. Indeed, their actions serve as a record of religious grievance between the State and its residents. Over this eight-year period Pennsylvania State officials passed legislation that institutionalized a Protestant education into the public school system. They did so under the pretense of preserving the supremacy of American values and norms. But, although the State took a much subtler approach to effectuating their change, Catholics took notice and began to fight back as their American communities came under legal sanction. Through pamphlets, newspapers, sermons, and outright resistance Catholics publically criticized and condemned the blatant restrictions on their first amendment right to religious freedom. Likewise, Protestant nativists took the initiative to prevent the spread of popular Catholic ideas and criticisms, and formed associations like the APA and the ARA. It is these groups that came to represent the public face, and radical agenda of Protestant nativists who opposed immigration and both ethnic and religious diversity. Lastly,



although this is a brief look into the origins in this conflict, it shows us that for some eight years, Americans in the State Legislature, nativist communities, and Catholic immigrant communities, all attempted in one way or another to effectuate their own change from within the system. Thus with this perspective—that a social restraint or threshold indeed existed and influenced the actions of disgruntled communities—it is clear that each instance of unrest possesses a greater depth surrounding what specifically raised tensions and led to violence.

This brings us to the actions of those directly engaged in civil unrest. First and foremost, we can discern from the account, that those fighting in these riots were particularly well-armed. Aside from rocks, batons, and other handheld missiles, belligerents on both sides utilized the deadly effectiveness of pistols, muskets, and cannon at short range. However, aside from the surprising number of firearms involved, we can assess the growing levels of violent actions as the days between May and July 8, 1844 elapsed. Beginning on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, a nativist rally was ousted by street fighting instigated by the Irish Catholic community. On May 6<sup>th</sup>, another nativist rally was plagued with street fights, rocks, and gunfire, ultimately leading to the death of two men, one of whom was George Shifler. On May 7<sup>th</sup>, a memorializing nativist march for George Shifler devolved into chaos as once again street fights, gunfire, and destruction broke out; ultimately destroying thirty buildings and killing one Catholic, Joseph Rice. On May 8<sup>th</sup>, the nativists took to the streets in an effort to burn Catholic businesses, churches, and homes. The end result was some fifty properties burned and twelve Catholics killed. As the turmoil was quelled by State Militia throughout June; on July 5<sup>th</sup> a nativist mob besieged a Catholic church accused of stockpiling weapons for an offensive. Although the mob was correct about the stockpiling, they were wrong about the coming offensive, when in fact the Catholics were simply providing for their own personal defense. The mob continually gathered and harassed the church

for two days, until on July 7<sup>th</sup> the mob attacked the State Militia guarding the church. This engagement ended in a negotiated truce, but as evening fell the State Militia were given a directive to clear the streets and restore order. This is when the greatest clash occurred between some five thousand Militiamen and an equal number of rioters. On July 8<sup>th</sup> the state troops emerged victorious, sustaining over a dozen killed and fifty wounded. Thus, when looking at this timeline of violent acts both the ferocity with which Americans of the time fought over religious and cultural preservation, and the rapid escalation of violent acts were striking. What begins as a fist fight on one day, can easily turn into a gun fight the next, and when one side feels they are losing, chaos—the likes of which require intervention by the State Militia—erupts.

### Cincinnati 1855

Moving out of Philadelphia's Nativist Riots, another instance of great civil unrest triggered by nativist violence, came just ten years later in April of 1855. In this case, the city of Cincinnati, Ohio saw an eruption of violence over election proceedings to decide the city's new mayor. The principal episodes in this conflict featured heavy fighting over possession of a cannon and the suppression of political representation in immigrant communities. Additionally, this account clarifies just how powerful American nativism had become by the year 1855. No longer would nativists coalesce into minor associations like the ARA or the APA; rather by 1849 they had grown into a formal order known as the Order of the Star Spangled Banner. However, even this had its limitations. Neither an association nor an order could directly control government policy; it would take a political party and candidate to match. Thus, in the early 1850s the Know Nothing Party emerged as an official political platform parroting nativism's most popular ideals. Nonetheless, when it came to the political demographic of 1850s Cincinnati, nativists and Know Nothings were in the minority. In fact, throughout the 1850s Cincinnati

residents overwhelmingly voted Democrat instead. In hindsight, potential reasoning behind this political favoritism could be attributed to the nearly 45,000 German and Irish immigrants living in the city.<sup>87</sup> These families may not have understood the intricacies of U.S. political parties, but they understood two things very well —desperation from their experiences in their home countries, and more particularly, hostility. For, hostility toward their native cultures, religions, and social status were precisely what they experienced in daily life and heard in Know Nothing rhetoric. Therefore, it could be said that immigrants consistently voted Democrat to oppose Know Nothing policy. Indeed, even in the aftermath of the riots, the Cincinnati chapter of Know Nothings disbanded, and Democrats maintained power. Thus, we will come to see Cincinnati's Nativist Riots as the climatic end in the struggle to retain Know Nothing control over Cincinnati.

Found and detailed in a 1993 Master's thesis, by Mary Mairose, "Nativism On the Ohio: Know Nothings in Cincinnati and Louisville 1853-1855" a high quality account of Cincinnati's 1855 riot exists. Step by step, her thesis illuminates factional grievances, acts of violence, and notable changes made in the aftermath of unrest. She accomplished this with exceptional skill by referring directly to Cincinnati newspapers such as Cincinnati's *Commercial* and *Enquirer*. Both of these papers enabled her to draw from numerous accounts and perspectives, to illustrate the many events that transpired between both sides. In doing so, she revealed that Cincinnati's Nativist Riots held minimal religious or cultural motivation. For, instead of fighting over social supremacy of the Bible or American culture, Cincinnati's riots were fought to determine immigrant voting rights and Democrat control over the city.

Beginning with a lesser known instance of civil unrest, Mairose emphasized the Bedini Incident of 1853 as the closest event of civil unrest, relative to the riot in 1855. The Bedini

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<sup>87</sup> Mary A. Mairose. "Nativism On the Ohio: Know Nothings in Cincinnati and Louisville 1853-1855." MA Thesis, Ohio State University, 1993. pp 45-82.

Incident began as a social response from the German Democrat community, over the arrival of a Papal Emissary, Cardinal Gaetano Bedini. Upon the arrival of Cardinal Bedini, many German residents identified him as an ally of nativists and the Know Nothings. Bedini was a powerful Catholic Cardinal with connections to the Pope and was seen as a force of opposition to the German community. Although Bedini had not officially made any moves against the Germans of Cincinnati, the protestors were not far off in their theories. For, just as nativists sought to purify and protect the future of American culture, so too did the Catholic Church in relation to their own international following. The Catholic Church, and its agents, actively sought to convert Protestants back to Catholicism, vigorously working to hinder Protestant agendas worldwide. Therefore, all things Catholic resembled a conservative ideology, and whatever resembled conservative ideology, resembled Know Nothing rhetoric in the 1850s.<sup>88</sup>

Nonetheless, the Bedini Incident occurred on December 21, 1853, when four hundred German men, accompanied by one hundred women and children, marched near Bedini's residence and called for his removal from the city. As Cincinnati Police witnessed these events, they reported back to Police Chief Thomas Lukins and Police Court Judge William Spooner, who in response deployed a one-hundred-man force to disperse the crowd. As the officers approached the crowd, newspaper accounts tell that a protestor fired a gun at the officers. At that point the officers charged the crowd and began fighting and making arrests. In the end over fifty arrests were made, two officers and fifteen Germans had been injured, and one German had been killed. In the aftermath, an investigation into the actions of Chief Lukins and Judge Spooner fell in their favor as Mayor David Snelbaker commended them for their control during the situation.<sup>89</sup> However just two years later, Cincinnati's highly esteemed police department

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

demonstrated a minimal effectiveness in preventing thousands of German and nativist residents, across the city's Eleventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth Wards, from feuding and killing each other in the streets.

Between April 2<sup>nd</sup> and April 7, 1855, a controversy escalated into violence as Cincinnati was set to hold a general election for a new mayor. At the center of this controversy were two candidates, former newspaper editor and prominent Know Nothing, James Taylor and former Democrat State Legislator, James Farran. As each candidate competed and debated for the vote, it became evidently clear that Taylor and the nativists were going to lose significantly. Thus, in a final and desperate attempt to sway the vote, on election day rumors were spread amongst Know Nothing supporters that a German polling office in the Eleventh Ward was forcefully prohibiting the voting of Know Nothings and Americans. This enraged many Know Nothings, and soon a large group of them had descended on the Eleventh Ward's polling office. Once there, accounts tell that a German militia unit could be seen firing a cannon on a hill nearby. Nativists quickly took to the hill, captured the cannon, and wheeled it back to the Eleventh Ward polling office. At this point Mayor Snelbaker appeared on the scene with police officers, in an effort to verbally prevent violence. This did not work, and once the cannon had been placed in position outside the office, nativists loaded it with stones and fired multiple times at voters waiting in line to cast their ballot. Indeed, many voters were injured as the nativists simultaneously fired their cannon, attacked the Mayor, and burn the ward's ballot box.<sup>90</sup>

At this point, a large part of the nativist mob redirected their attention toward the polling office of the Irish Thirteenth Ward. However, upon arrival the mob found a closed polling office, with its ballot boxes removed. As a result of their frustration, the mob dragged their stolen

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<sup>90</sup> Mairose, 127-163.

cannon from the German Eleventh Ward, to the Irish ward's polling office where they proceeded to fire on bystanders. As night set in, a greater battle ensued between the city's German residents and nativists over possession of the cannon. The Germans won, and dragged the cannon back to their Twelfth Ward and stowed it in their 'Over the Rhine' District.<sup>91</sup>

On Tuesday the following day, word went out across the city that the mayoral election was deemed illegitimate on the grounds that more votes had been cast than there were registered voters. As a direct result, nativist mobs descended on the Twelfth Ward, going as far as to storm the district's polling office bent on burning the ballot box inside. Later that afternoon, as Germans fought to push nativists back, a large nativist mob made an attempt to forcefully retrieve the infamous cannon from the Over the Rhine District. This attempt failed as German militias effected devastating volleys from both muskets and the singular cannon. This momentous and bloody clash pushed the nativists back for an extended amount of time, and gave the Germans from 7 to 9 p.m. to erect a defensive wall across the only bridge connecting their district to the rest of the city. Simultaneously, behind the wall both German and Irish residents formed militias and began patrolling the streets. In the meantime, on the other side of the German wall, little triangular pieces of red paper could be seen littered throughout the streets. This peculiar scene was a calling card of the Know Nothings —signifying the call for an emergency meeting.<sup>92</sup>

Later that same day, between 8 and 9 p.m. hundreds of nativists gathered at the blockaded bridge. At this point of the night, tensions had risen so great between the two factions, that even calls for peace from city officials like Mayor Snelbaker, candidate James Farran, and Timothy Day (House Representative for Ohio), could not deescalate the situation. Both sides had already

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

been insulted beyond reproach and soon, violence rang out. As noted in several newspapers, at 10 p.m. some four-hundred nativists, including women and children, assembled on the bridge and began to walk across led by fife and drum. Witnesses recalled that on the German side, armed men could be seen in windows, on roofs, and in rank and file on the street. As the nativists walked closer and closer, this vast number of men opened fire, killing two and wounding dozens of men, women, and children. The nativists had no other option but to retreat. After this carnage, James Farran and Timothy Day were able to launch negotiations with the German leaders for a cease-fire and return of the now infamous cannon. The Germans agreed, and in the dead of night they disassembled the wall, disbanded their militias, and returned the cannon to city officials.<sup>93</sup>

On the final day of unrest, Wednesday, nativists woke up to unbelievable news that the Germans had ceased hostilities, dismantled the wall, and returned the cannon. This news was so unbelievable that nativists swarmed their local armory to see the cannon for themselves. However, to their great displeasure these nativists quickly noticed the carriage with which to transport the cannon had not been returned as well. As more rumors and emergency meetings took place, word of another nativist raid propagated throughout the city. In turn, the Germans were brought back to the negotiating table and obliged to return the carriage, which they did without incident. In addition to this controversy, on that same day it was reported that Democrat James Farran won the mayoral election, officially ending the Know Nothing presence in Cincinnati. The next day would have certainly been followed by violence if a torrential down pour had not fallen over the city, halting all further plans and reducing the severity of past transgressions with a forced passing of time. Lastly, during the aftermath of these riots a twist of irony saw Mayor Snelbaker censured for his lack of control in a time of crisis.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, due

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

to this remarkably detailed account provided by Mary Mairose, the exact place in which Cincinnati's Riot occupies in the history of U.S. civil unrest is clear. For we can easily identify that factional grievances based in political and ethnic friction, acts of violence that took on a unique form, and outcomes that reflected a weak enforcement of the law played important roles in this case.

Beginning with factional grievances, we see another case of civil unrest instigated by the divisive nature of American society in the mid-nineteenth century. For, just as society legally allowed for nativists to organize into associations and political parties, so too did it allow for immigrants to fight back by running their own political candidates, publishing editorials, and arming themselves for protection. Thus we can discern that although nativists and immigrant communities, prior 1855 were essentially at each other's throats, they exchanged blows with each other from within the legal parameters. In turn, we can relate this logic to what was occurring in 1850s Cincinnati. For in this case, nativists and immigrants were given the same tools and opportunities to effectuate political change. In this fight for political dominance, immigration proved to be a potent accelerant that gave German and Irish residents sway during elections. As a result, Cincinnati's Democrat Party remained in power throughout the 1850s. This was the principal issue that inspired nativists to engage in numerous violent acts against the immigrant communities living in the Eleventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth Wards. Simply put, Know Nothing candidate James Taylor was the party's last chance at regaining a foothold in city affairs; thus when voters expressed overwhelming support for James Farran, nativists resorted to deceptive tricks that sparked factional violence.

Next, when looking at the chain of violent acts, striking conclusions are discernable for Cincinnati's German community. In a brief reiteration, on election day (Monday), nativists



spread rumors that a polling office in the German Eleventh Ward, was disenfranchising Americans and Know Nothings from casting their ballot. This rumor directly instigated a chain of violent acts, when hundreds of nativists marched on the ward's polling office, stole a cannon, and began firing it at voters. Another attack followed when the mob redirected their efforts to the Irish-dominant Thirteenth Ward. The mob wheeled their cannon from the Eleventh Ward to the Thirteenth Ward, and fired it upon residents who lived near the polling office. As nighttime set in on that Monday, a larger fight ensued between Germans and nativists over possession of the cannon. The German belligerents claimed victory, and wheeled the cannon back to their Over the Rhine District.

On Tuesday, another nativist attack occurred in the Twelfth Ward, as nativists sought to destroy the polling office there. Although this initial attack was unsuccessful, later in the day fighting intensified when nativist mobs fought to win back possession of the cannon. However, when the mob reached the over the Rhine District, they were met with volleys from men armed with muskets and the single cannon. In turn, the mob retreated and the Germans began to build their notorious wall on the single bridge connecting their ward with the rest of the city. Later that same night, the carnage escalated further when at 10 p.m. a mob of four-hundred nativists marched toward the fortifications. The approaching mob was met with significant firepower, as Germans in windows, on rooftops, and in the streets opened fire on them. However, this barrage of gunfire over the bridge, marked the last instance of violence as the factions withdrew.

What is clearly conveyed by this recounting, are several major characteristics unique to Cincinnati's German community. Based on this sequence of violence, Cincinnati's German community not only exercised a great deal of political sway, but also a great deal of militaristic capability. This is evident as the level of deadliness in each clash escalated. For instance,

Cincinnati's German population was able to wrestle control of a cannon away from nativists who were actively operating it against them. On the next day, the Germans were able to combat sporadic nativist attacks, while organizing themselves into armed militias. This mobilization in the midst of such a larger confrontation is admirable in itself, but when a second grand offensive was launched to decide possession of the cannon once more, German organization and arms decided the day. Lastly, at 10 p.m. on the night of Tuesday, German defenders demonstrated their capabilities when they stood their ground in the face of four-hundred approaching nativists seemingly bent on destruction.

Finally, with both factional grievances and the dynamic sequence of violence in mind, we come to the weak response of Cincinnati's law enforcement. As mentioned in Mairose's retelling, those distinct representatives of law and order, men like Police Chief Thomas Lukins, Police Court Judge William Spooner, and Mayor David Snelbaker were charged with upholding the law and preserving order, however during the riots of April 1855, they did anything but. Drawing upon accounts of the Monday riots, Mayor Snelbaker and a police escort attempted to defuse nativist violence through verbal reasoning. In the process, they themselves were physically assaulted and forced to retreat. Another instance displaying weak leadership took place just prior to Tuesday's carnage on the bridge. In this situation, Mayor Snelbaker, Timothy Day, and mayoral candidate James Farran failed to coerce those four-hundred nativists from attempting to cross the blockaded bridge. As a result, residents of the same city fought, shot, and killed each other without pause in a scene of truly horrific standards. Perhaps the only success this group of city officials could boast, was their midnight negotiations in the aftermath of the 10 p.m. carnage on the bridge.

In turn, it is now clear how the issue of immigration and its negative social reactions influenced these incidents in both Philadelphia and Cincinnati. Indeed, they clearly reflect social frictions related to ethnicity, religion, and political party. However, as these events relate to this study's demonstration of issues that directed and occupied the minds of riotous nineteenth century Americans, we see the fears that Americans of the time saw. And indeed their fear was based in resistance to a new group's culture and power. But, what is more profound are the stakes of the game. For instance, the central issue in 1844 stemmed from Irish Catholic resistance to legally bound, socio-religious norms. Although an important episode, the religious issues in Philadelphia are not on the same level of severity as the battle for political supremacy in Cincinnati. In fact, what is clear by this escalation in root cause, is that German immigrants between 1844 and 1855 became numerically dominant over every other group. Whether that meant claiming a numerical majority in city population, religious beliefs, or votes, immigrants were steadily assimilating and improving their own social standing in cities across the North. However, as displayed in the accounts above, the immigrants' move for a share in American society did not come easily. Indeed, it was Americans already living in country, who witnessed, anticipated, feared, and then committed violence to prevent a perceived immigrant take over. Therefore, in summation of nineteenth century America's trying social questions in slavery and immigration, along with two violent riots in 1844 and 1855, a dive into the implications, clauses, and greater impacts of the Draft Act passed in 1863, will solidify and complete this study's demonstration of what exactly directed and occupied the minds of riotous Americans living in the late nineteenth century.

### The Draft Act of 1863 — “A rich man’s war and a poor man’s fight”

In reinforcing this study’s assertion behind labeling 1863 as the ‘grand apex’ or ‘tipping point’ in the unrest seen during the 1860s, the undying question of why 1863 was so rife with unrest comes to bear. And certainly the answer lies within one document of a truly influential and instigating nature —the Enrollment Act of 1863. Enacted by Congress with the aim of supplementing the Union’s losses after two years of heavy fighting with the South, this act placed quotas of men upon all states still residing in the Union. The act called for men between the ages of twenty and forty-five to be mustered into professional soldiers. However, contained within this act was a set of considerations that could effectively exempt both rich and vulnerable people from military service. For starters, common sense omissions were made for sole household providers above the age of thirty-five, and for people with chronic health issues. Among the controversial loopholes —if a draftee could afford to pay a commutation fee of three hundred dollars<sup>95</sup>, then that draftee could exempt themselves from a single draft year. Moreover, if a draftee could provide a physical substitute, then that draftee would be exempt from all future drafts.<sup>96</sup> In a compounding effect, this call to arms also stirred racially charged anger, frustrations, and conspiracies, as it simultaneously disallowed African Americans from being called up while leaving an easy way out for rich whites. In response to these controversial aspects contained within the Draft, longstanding social issues such as rich versus poor, black versus white, and government versus the people were vehemently reignited across the Union.

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<sup>95</sup> \**Three hundred dollars*- for an unskilled worker in 1863 was significantly more than what even the highest paid (unskilled) worker could earn in a single year.

<sup>96</sup> Justin T. Howell. “Motivations of Civil War Soldiers from Western New York” (2012). (MA Thesis) *History Theses*. Paper 11.

But aside from the broader effect, the Draft posed a personal threat to everyone not fortunate enough to possess three hundred dollars or a substitute. Indeed, from an individual's standpoint, March 3, 1863 was the day that raised tensions and fears. For almost immediately, every household in the Union was effected by a federally mandated quota. As if overnight, Congress moved to mobilize the huge number of males that characterized big American families of the time. In addition, the Draft was also pushed onto newly arriving immigrants as a step in the pathway to citizenship. As a result, and within months, the Draft had earned a reputation as a predetermined, unfair, and highly discriminatory system. And in a sense it was, as it often drained the male population of whole towns and preferentially conscripted newly arrived immigrants and the poor working-class clustered within cities.

In turn, the product of mounting tensions over the Draft often manifested into violent riots and targeted destruction, as working-class Americans, Irish, and Germans made their stand against both state and federal officials appointed to oversee conscription. Indeed, a sign of this universal consensus on the issue can be assessed in a phrase that reached its peak in common usage during these years, "A rich man's war and a poor man's fight". Thus, a chief concept to take away from this study's emphasis on the Draft, is that the public's universal rejection of it was a significant motivation, often the central focus, in the minds of those who participated in unrest in 1863 and beyond. Therefore, this study will now conclude its argument for the massive influence of trying social questions, violent nativist riots, and a highly controversial Draft in 1863; all of which unquestionably directed and occupied the minds of, contributed to, influenced, and set precedents for, riotous Americans during the 1860s across the North.

## CHAPTER 3

*Civil Unrest 1861-1865*

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*The Buffalo Riots of 1862 and 1863*

### Introduction to Chapter Three

Proceeding beyond an analysis of specific contributors to unrest seen during the 1860s, this chapter shifts focus to render an accurate assessment of the popular civil unrest seen between 1861 and 1865. To accomplish this, a narrow dive into several notable riots that broke out in great Northern industrial cities will take shape. Indeed, places like New York City, Detroit, Baltimore, and Buffalo, are just a few great American cities that will succumb to fiery and impassioned divisions that were spurred on by an amalgamation of negative public sentiments surrounding support for the Civil War, the presence of millions of Irish and German immigrants, and the first real emergence of racial equality in America. Thus on a structural level, this chapter will begin with an examination of seven commonly known instances of Northern civil unrest. These will serve to illuminate shared trends, motivations, levels of violence, and responses from law enforcement in an effort to produce the finest possible look into the immensely complicated dynamics that lay at the heart of every instance between 1861 and 1865. After these seven, and the many insights they will convey, the unknown stories behind Buffalo's Stevedore Riot of 1862 and its race riot of 1863, will be shared directly from firsthand accounts. Indeed, these accounts come from interviews conducted by Buffalo's columnists working for the *Commercial, Morning Express*, and the *Courier* during 1862 and 1863. They will come to give us a frame by frame accounting of what exactly occurred in both riots. With these, this study will confirm its assertion that each riotous episode during the Civil War shares a connection to one or more prominent issues discussed in chapter two.

In further detail, this chapter will strive to show that during the first half of the 1860s, specific and pressing social issues acted as beacons of motivation from which immigrant communities derived their riotous spirit. In fact, through an analysis of unrest during these four

years, it is helpful to categorize Civil War-era unrest into two distinctive periods —the first group, containing events from 1861 to 1863, are instances that reflect a number of rising social concerns in urban areas. Some of these were derived from the election of Abraham Lincoln, war with the South and as we will see in Buffalo —workplace grievances. However, the second group spanning from 1863 to 1865, will reflect several public mobilizations in the spirit of combating longstanding issues freshly reignited by the Draft —rich versus poor, black versus white, and government versus the people.

Next, in purely methodological terms this study will examine the motivating social grievances, levels of violence, and the outcomes behind the Baltimore Riot (1861), the New York City Draft Riots (1863), the Boston Draft Riot (1863), the Detroit Race Riot (1863), the Holmes County, Ohio Draft Riot (1863), the Schuylkill County Draft Riot in Pennsylvania (1863), and the Coles County Draft Riot in Charleston, Illinois (1864). By taking this approach this study hopes to illuminate the intricacies relative to a social phenomenon of widespread unrest in the 1860s. And, indeed the causal factors, public reactions, and the deeper significance behind each will become available to offer an answer to what exactly was occurring to America's great Northern cities.

However, for this study to boast a strong and accurate assessment of unrest over these four years, corroborating evidence will be necessary. Thus part two of this chapter will seek to affirm this study's own assessment about unrest during the Civil War. For in large part this study has been constructed based on the findings of other historians, and thus requires additional material of a unique nature. Therefore, this latter section will present a case study of two riots in 1862 and 1863 Buffalo, New York in an effort to reinforce the notion that each burst of unrest during the Civil War was indeed connected to one or more of the influencers found across the



first half of the nineteenth century. And as previously done, a similar line of analysis will be applied, focusing on the motivational grievances, violent actions, and significant outcomes of each.

## Introduction to Part One: New Social Challenges

As it relates to these four specific years of civil unrest, it is beneficial to identify several social challenges that confronted the Union during the war. First of these was the perpetual strain on local communities, where a majority of men in town enlisted for service in the Union Army. Indeed, at the root of this societal strain was the battlefield effectiveness of Confederate generals against their Union counterparts, and as a result the Union Army suffered a disproportionate amount of losses to victories. So great were their losses that Congress was forced to enact a draft on March 3, 1863, directly resulting in mass enlistments. The loss of these men, especially in rural communities, stunted the production, commerce, and population growth of whole regions. However, as an issue, the social strain on manpower manifested at a gradual pace, garnering minor public attention from 1861 to 1863. Nonetheless, beyond 1863 the issue did attract the attention of every American as the full carnage inflicted on American battlefields was felt by every family via the Enrollment Act.

Another unique wartime challenge stemmed from longstanding nativist issues with the millions of German and Irish immigrants perpetually coming into the United States. In industrial cities, nativist leaders of the 1860s still pursued the best methods to stifle or manage immigrant influence, competition in the job market, and contribution to the war effort. Although both outright political and culture wars between nativist and immigrant communities had ended unsuccessfully in previous decades, new tactics like suppressing immigrant pay rates, workplace opportunity, and social mobility, became the preferred methods for nativist politicians and bourgeois alike. But no matter how subtle this may sound, immigrant workers often resorted to strikes and protests as a way to fight back for their fair wages, work hours, and safe working conditions. Furthermore, this friction between nativists and immigrants deepened in 1863 with

the enacting of the Draft, as it mandated the mobilization of America's male citizenry, often targeting newly arrived immigrants. From the nativist perspective, the Draft offered a clean opportunity to whisk large numbers of newly arrived immigrant men away from their city. Indeed, for nativists this scheme proved massively beneficial as immigrants were forced into a sort of 'trial by arms' to prove their loyalty to America. Indeed, as alluded to in Christian Samito's *Becoming American Under Fire*, immigrant assimilation into American society had to be earned and paid for by the blood, sweat, and tears of military service.<sup>97</sup>

A third social challenge to states remaining in the Union, were newly freed blacks and systemic racism. Although many in the U.S. remember the Civil War as a fight to rid our country of the institution of slavery, many neglect the reality that preservation of the Union was Lincoln's original goal. However, as thousands of men perished on the battlefield and as destruction was brought to bear on American towns, President Lincoln understood that the Civil War should not just be about preserving the Union. Rather, his goals should reflect the core American principle of 'freedom for all', by working to permanently abolish slavery in the Confederate states, and passing the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Thus, in the realization of his new goals the Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862, (taking effect January 1, 1863) definitively stated the Union's goals and ideological ambitions, should they win. But regardless of what the President advocated for, there was still a great degree of racism embedded into all of American society. It may be difficult for us in hindsight to understand the full depth in which racism played in the structuring of society, but we can clearly discern that racism in the late nineteenth century hindered voting rights, property ownership, education, commercial success, and other civil rights for African Americans. Thus the moral reality behind the Civil War was somewhat of an illusion,

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<sup>97</sup> Christian G. Samito. *Becoming American Under Fire Irish Americans, African Americans, and the Politics of Citizenship During the Civil War Era*. Cornell: Cornell University Press 2009.

for even during our bloodiest war, in part waged in the interest of abolishing slavery, many Americans were socially accustomed to the restrictive social role relegated to even freed blacks. And, although the great sacrifice and bloodshed seen on Civil War battlefields led to a great triumph over the institution of slavery, and the passing of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, the public's racially biased perspective toward the role of African Americans stood firm in the face of the slightest possibility of racial equality.

### Baltimore Riot, 1861

In turn, with a brief reiteration of overarching issues, and how they impacted the Union during the Civil War, this study will shift into the first instance of civil unrest relative to this time frame, the Baltimore Riot of 1861. A major source in this specific instance comes from former Baltimore Mayor, George William Brown. In his book, "*Baltimore and The Nineteenth of April 1861: A Study of the War*"<sup>98</sup> written after the matter in 1887, Brown offers his own perspective as a member of the Constitutionalist party, and as someone who experienced firsthand, the shock and awe of the unrest. Thus with his personal recollection from his term as Mayor, the level of detail produced in this account offers a clear progression of events that point to specific social grievances as primary motivators behind the riot of 1861. Among other revelations discernable from Brown's account, was a unique perspective of someone jailed by Lincoln's notorious suspension of habeas corpus. And in stark contrast of how history portrays Lincoln in modern times, in this account we see a different man, determined to resist and suppress secessionist sympathizers—even going so far as to institute martial law and jail numerous members of state and city government for dissidence.

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<sup>98</sup> George William Brown. *Baltimore and The Nineteenth of April, 1861 A Study of the War*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1887.

As detailed in Brown's work, the origins of this riot were deeply rooted in widely held sentiments of an anti-union, anti-war, and pro-slavery nature. In fact, we get a clear picture of Baltimore as a major city in swing, that could secede at any given time, a fact easily identified by statistics like the number of votes cast for President Lincoln during the 1860 election. During which only 1,100 votes out of a total 30,000 submitted by Baltimore's voters, went to Lincoln. In conjunction with Baltimore's disapproval of Lincoln, by April 17, 1861 events like Lincoln's victory, the secession of South Carolina, the fall of Fort Sumter, and the constant flow of federal troops through the city, both pushed and emboldened Baltimore's Southern sympathizers. As a result, their response came in the form of civil disobedience, when a mob of these sympathizers gathered to prevent the Sixth Massachusetts Militia from passing through the city streets of Baltimore on their way to defend Washington D.C.<sup>99</sup>

To understand and visualize exactly how the mob hindered the movement of troops in the city, we must reveal the problematic arrangement of transportation in the City of Baltimore, beginning with an ordinance passed in 1831. This ordinance prevented steam-powered railroads within city limits. This meant that travelers entering Baltimore aboard steam-powered trains had to abide by the city ordinance by disengaging their steam engine, and relying on horse power to drive them through the city. As one can deduce, this ordinance wreaked havoc on both military logistics and civilian travel, serving as a counterproductive limitation.<sup>100</sup>

Therefore, at 10 a.m. on April 17<sup>th</sup>, as a steam engine containing 220 soldiers of the Sixth Massachusetts observed the city's ordinance while en route to the steam friendly Camden Station, they were intercepted. As the soldiers' route slowly became blocked off by an angry mob of city residents sympathetic to the South (estimated to be in the thousands), their response

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid, pp. 20-27.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, pp. 42-47.

was to disembark from their train cars. However, in the process they noticed the mob had dismantled rail track and placed large sections of them in the way of the train. As the militia began to march in formation for the remaining distance, the mob seized the moment and attacked them from all sides with rocks, blunt instruments, and firearms. In turn, the militia was given the order to fire on those attacking them. Within a short time frame a massive brawl combined with sporadic shooting ensued. Initially the soldiers were outnumbered and outmatched, but as some fifty Baltimore Police officers intervened, the situation shifted in the soldiers' favor.

Nevertheless, fighting continued right up until the last soldier reached Camden Station, where the unit was able to board a steam engine and depart for Washington. As the Sixth left town, the mob continued to fight with Baltimore Police, soon finding a new victim to unleash their anger upon. Indeed, the mob's anger became focused around the publisher and editor of the Baltimore *Wecker*, a German newspaper company with pro-Union sympathies. The mob attacked the paper's office, decimating the structure. However, in a stroke of good luck, the *Wecker's* publisher and editor were able to flee town and escape the violence that was sure to visit them.<sup>101</sup>

In the aftermath of this riot four soldiers of the Sixth had died, while thirty-six others sustained injuries. Those numbers sit alongside twelve dead rioters and an estimated one hundred others wounded. Over the next six months, continued steps were taken to secure Baltimore from the hands of future secessionist movements, going as far as to jail suspected dissenters and suspending their right to habeas corpus. However, for further clarity into the administrative clamp down during the aftermath, a vote on April 29<sup>th</sup> held in the Maryland State Legislature served as a focal point in a greater federal response. The subject of that vote was Maryland's secession from the Union. And, although the Legislature voted fifty-three to thirteen against

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

secession, President Lincoln would be deeply concerned at the mere proposal of such a vote. Indeed, Lincoln had based his concerns on the recent riot that hindered troop movements, exposed a large number of Southern sympathizers in Baltimore, and shone a light on the ambitions of those state politicians who favored secession. Ultimately, Lincoln's federal response was the institution of martial law on May 13<sup>th</sup>. In hindsight, many charge President Lincoln with an abuse of power in his handling of Baltimore. For, under martial law a majority of city officials including the Police Chief, were sacked or jailed without due process. Indeed, among those wrongly imprisoned was the grandson of Francis Scott Key who ironically served jail time in Fort McHenry for his criticisms in a local paper. Even members of the State Legislature were jailed for suggesting that suspension of habeas corpus was unconstitutional. In the end, however, the federal clamp down on May 13<sup>th</sup> was successful in suppressing any residual prevalence of secessionist ambitions, and Baltimore became an integral appendage of the Union war effort.<sup>102</sup>

Thus, within this narrative it is clear that even at the onset of the Civil War, divisions were festering within the Union itself. Indeed, in certain areas rhetoric of an anti-war and anti-Lincoln tint could dubiously motivate the rebellious spirit within urban communities. In addition, the awesome, and sometimes unjust, power of President Lincoln is evident. However, aside from those two aspects, this account revealed a particularly nativist sentiment held amongst city residents. For, as mentioned in Brown's account, pro-Union Germans like the editor and publisher of the *Wecker*, were also targets of the mob. However, to further corroborate the notion that Baltimore's mob possessed nativist beliefs, and targeted other ethnicities, we need only look at the ethnic composition of the Sixth Massachusetts. Intriguingly, according to John Hanson,

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid, pp. 52-59.

author of *“Historical sketch of the old Sixth Regiment”*, the Sixth Massachusetts Militia was comprised of men recruited from the German and Irish communities of Lowell and Lawrence, Massachusetts.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, as we examine those caught in the cross hairs of the mob, it is clear that this riot was not simply about the coming war or the election of Lincoln, although those are the motivating factors upon face value. In fact, as one can discern solely based on the targets of physical violence, (the immigrant dominant regiment and those Germans working for the *Wecker*), Baltimore’s mob displayed a deeper agenda —to effectuate a communal push back against the growing inclusion and assimilation of immigrants in American, Maryland, and Baltimore society. Thus Baltimore’s riot stands as a considerable beginning. Its occurrence and latter vote for succession confirms that city residents stood divided on three central issues: war with the South, the election of Abraham Lincoln, and the rising social standing of German and Irish immigrants.

### Other Instances of Civil Unrest & Apex Year 1863

Transitioning out of 1861 and into 1862 —one year prior to the apex in a phenomenon of popular civil disorder— it is worth a brief mention that unrest was occurring in Southern cities such as St. Louis, Richmond, Columbus, and Atlanta. In this brief dive into the South, a larger picture observed from both in and outside of the Union, begins to take shape. For, the Southern public also existed in a state of civil disorder that deserves this study’s attention. Therefore, what is most beneficial from looking at Southern unrest is a potential to understand the national impact of a great economic and political fission levied by the Civil War.

In a brief articulation, the unrest that visited the city of St. Louis, in the border state of Missouri, occurred in May, 1861 when a unit of Union Militia comprised of German volunteers

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<sup>103</sup> John Hanson. *Historical sketch of the old Sixth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteers, during its three campaigns in 1861, 1862, 1863, and 1864*. Boston: Lee and Shepard 1866. pp. 15-30.



thwarted a conspiracy to place major portions of Missouri under Confederate control. Known as the Camp Jackson Affair, this event was a part of the political and economic factors of the area. During this engagement, a Volunteer Union Militia successfully achieved the surrender of a nearly seven-hundred-man force of Southern conspirators. Needless to say, their arrests led to a small uprising against the Militia in the city of St. Louis. The duration of this clash elapsed over two days' time, and was ultimately ended with the institution of martial law and a continued presence of U.S. Army regulars. Nonetheless, the heroism of those German volunteers was all for not, as October of 1861 saw the Confederacy lay claim over all of Missouri.<sup>104</sup>

Another notable series of events both occurring in the South and deserving mention, were the widespread Bread Riots in 1863. According to a journal article, "*Women Numerous and Armed: The Confederate Food Riots*," an all-out economic collapse levied by war with the North, caused thousands of Southern women across several states to vandalize bakeries, warehouses, and stores. Derived from a slew of sources, things like decreased production, manpower, wages, agriculture, commerce, and a naval embargo riddled Southern communities, leaving many average people destitute and impoverished. In most areas, unrest went unmet by any counteractive force. However, in Richmond it was recounted that when confronted by an angry mob of women, Confederate President Jefferson Davis threw his pocket change at them, proceeded to read from the 148-year-old Riot Act of 1715, calling out the local militia afterwards.<sup>105</sup> In conclusion, these unique instances of Southern unrest offer a different perspective—that economic deprivation, rather than the 'traditional' social, ethnic, or racial tensions, sat at the core of Southern civil unrest.

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<sup>104</sup> James W. Covington. "The Camp Jackson Affair." *Missouri Historical Review* 1961. Vol. 55, No. 3, pp. 197-212.

<sup>105</sup> Stephanie McCurry. "Women Numerous and Armed: The Confederate Food Riots in Historical Perspective." *OAH Magazine of History*, Oxford University Press, April, 2013 Vol. 27, No. 2, pp 35–39.

Furthermore, although these instances of Southern unrest did not occur in urban centers of the North, they are still relative to conceptualizing both direct and indirect effects of the Civil War; effects that reveal a fundamental characteristic about each case of civil unrest across nineteenth century America —that civil unrest perpetually involves and affects the lives of both poor working and middle-class people. And indeed this perspective of the average person has been, and will continue to be, chronicled across this study as latter sections will reveal the struggles and frustrations of Buffalo’s dockworkers in both 1862 and 1863. Moreover, when we begin to examine those individuals involved in instances of civil unrest, we see that no matter if an individual is an active participant or member of law enforcement fighting against the unruly mob, both sides can identify their social standing somewhere between the poor and middle class. But aside from this underlying constant emphasized by the events of Southern unrest, our study returns to the North and its next great instance of unrest —the Detroit Race Riot of 1863.

### Detroit Race Riot, 1863

Reverting back to a chronological periodization of the study (1863-1865), we come to the Detroit Race Riot on March 6, 1863, just three days after the release of the Draft Act on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Although the Draft had not fully taken its position as the sole facilitator of unrest, a racial incident had. Indeed, the racial tensions in Detroit stemmed from the local demographics, political affiliation, and racial beliefs against blacks. To begin, we must consult an article from the *Journal of Ethnic History* by Nora Faires, “Across the Border to Freedom” in order to answer difficult questions pertaining to the formation of one of the North’s largest black communities. In this article, Detroit’s special position as a terminus for the underground railroad made it a common place of settlement for African Americans looking for work and a place to live. Additionally, one must consider Detroit’s unique position of close proximity to Canada. Indeed,

Detroit was one of the final stops along the great underground railroad, which allowed thousands of slaves to escape from their master's plantation, to free soil. However, for many of those runaway slaves who made it to cities like Detroit, a greater opportunity presented itself: Canada. In 1834, Canada abolished both the institution of slavery and the right to own slaves, effectively romanticizing and sanctifying the idea that, for blacks and other people of color, real freedom awaited them in Canada. However, the reality for a great many blacks who found themselves at the end of the underground railroad (in Detroit), too poor and with no means to cross the border, was to stay and make a life in the United States.<sup>106</sup>

Therefore, with one of the most difficult pieces of Detroit's African American historical demography laid before us, it is discernable that by 1863 a black community had existed in Detroit for at least two decades, and that through freedom, Detroit's black population saw growth and claimed their portion of the city's viable employment opportunities —solidifying their stake in the city. These jobs often took the form of low-level/unskilled labor positions and as one can infer, became a source of contention as poor Irish and German immigrants quickly found themselves in competition with blacks for jobs that had traditionally been dominated by their own communities. This meant that by 1863, even Detroit newspapers like the *Detroit Free Press* began to publish editorials that framed and blamed Detroit's black community for economic hardships facing poor whites —generally focusing on topics like the correlation between freed blacks and job competition.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Nora Faires. "Across the Border to Freedom: The International Underground Railroad Memorial and the Meanings of Migration." *Journal of Ethnic History* 2013. Vol. 32 No. 2 pp. 52-55.

<sup>107</sup> Matthew Kunding. "Racial Rhetoric: The Detroit Free Press and Its Part in the Detroit Race Riot of 1863." University of Michigan Press. *Michigan Journal of History* 2006, pp 5-10.

However, these editorials did not inflame racial unrest in the streets outright. Instead a high-profile court case did. As detailed in a journal article by Matthew Kunding, “Racial Rhetoric: The Detroit Free Press and Its Part in the Detroit Race Riot of 1863,” a man of Spanish and Native American descent by the name of William Faulkner was on trial for allegedly molesting two young white girls. Between March 3<sup>rd</sup> and March 6, 1863 the trial attracted a violent mob comprised of German, Irish, and Anglo-Protestant residents who gathered to harass Faulkner and show their disdain for his actions. By March 6<sup>th</sup> local newspapers had exacerbated the situation when in their coverage of the trial, categorized Faulkner as a ‘negro’. This enraged the crowd to a point of no return when they attacked Faulkner and the guardsmen who escorted him to and from the courthouse. On the same day (March 6<sup>th</sup>), and in the midst of an angry mob, the guardsmen were initially given an order to fire blank cartridges as a tactic to dissuade further dissent, but when this yielded no results, the soldiers loaded live ammunition. Firing into the mob for their own defense, Faulkner’s guardsmen struck both rioter and innocent bystander alike; the latter being a German man by the name Charles Langer. In a brief cessation of fire, the mob immediately realized that an innocent white man had been killed over what they perceived to be a black man’s trial.<sup>108</sup>

The mob became infuriated with racist passions and began to march into known black communities with the intent to loot shops, burn buildings, and beat every African American person they could find. In the midst of this racial chaos the Detroit Police and city officials proved effectively useless in attempting to combat the ensuing violence and destruction. Only after the State Militia restored order at 11 p.m. that night, did Detroiters find thirty-five buildings burned down, two men dead (one black one white), hundreds beaten and injured, and almost an

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<sup>108</sup> Kunding, 10-16.

equal number homeless. In the aftermath some notable outcomes relative to this event came about. First the formation of a brand new, full-time, professional police force. Second, new criminal investigations were brought forth to render justice in the case of the day's two deaths, and a refusal by the Democrat dominant City Council to allocate funds in the aftermath for black residents and business owners who lost property, possessions, and money in the violence.<sup>109</sup>

Drawing from the events of this terrible episode in Civil War-era unrest, it is clear that racism played a central role in the incitement of violence. Perhaps unseen in any previous incident covered in this study, the Detroit Riot of 1863 was in its entirety, fueled by racist beliefs. In fact, from the account, racial beliefs served as an instigating factor not once, but twice. The first instance was the racially biased news coverage of a court case between what Detroit residents perceived to be a black man, and two young white girls. Indeed, as March 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> elapsed, a mob began to form in response to accusations of the 'black' man's sexual assault on the young white girls. In the end Faulkner was initially charged with life in prison, but was later pardoned when the women later confessed to their fabrication of their claims in this case.<sup>110</sup> Nonetheless the narrative spun by local newspapers successfully motivated a white mob to congregate outside the courthouse during the trial. Indeed, one can see the correlation between the editorials, the formation of an angry mob, the following scuffle with prison guards escorting the defendant, the accidental killing of Langer, and lastly, the racial violence.

The second moment where racist beliefs changed the tide of Detroit's unrest was immediately after an innocent bystander of German descent was shot and killed by one of the prison guards fighting with the mob. By logic of the racist mob, even though a German immigrant who they regarded as one of the lowest in society had been killed, the mob still

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<sup>109</sup> Kunding, 16-29.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

sympathized with his white complexion. In turn, the racial rage inspired by the death of Charles Langer, a white man, during a black man's trial, led the mob to seek vengeance on the black community specifically. Therefore, through an examination of this event's racially motivated tipping points, it is evident that racism more than any other grievance played a direct role in a progression of events that led up to an outright race war.

### Rural Unrest: Holmes County (OH) & Schuylkill County (PA) Draft Riots, 1863

However, when assessing smaller incidents like the Holmes County Draft Riot and the Schuylkill County Draft Riot, Civil War-era unrest takes a new spin. A spin that contradicts the lawlessness of urban centers, as portrayed in the events of both Baltimore's and Detroit's riots. For, as these next two cases are presented, distinct variations in social grievances, violent actions, and responses from law enforcement, will make themselves strikingly clear. In determining these variations, this focus will emphasize uniquely rural aspects within motivational grievances (racial versus anti-draft versus anti-government) and responses from law enforcement entities (heavy or ineffective) within each case. Thus, in a general sense the next two accounts of civil unrest will serve to delineate fundamental distinctions between urban and rural unrest during the Civil War-era.

As documented by the Ohio Historical Society, the origins of what is known today as the Battle at Fort Fizzle, began on June 5, 1863, when residents of the Richard Township in Holmes County Ohio, attacked Elias Robinson, a federal agent enforcing the Draft (enacted on March 3<sup>rd</sup>). Upon receiving news of this assault, the Holmes County Provost Marshal, James Drake, ordered the arrest of the perpetrators. However, in the following days, an estimated one thousand men from across Holmes County turned out to free those arrested by the Provost Marshall. In the aftermath of this first engagement, the dissenters erected a small fort on a local farm; complete

with four cannons the men of Holmes County were determined to prevent the Draft in their hometown. In turn, on June 17<sup>th</sup> Colonel William Wallace of the Union Army's 15<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry Volunteers, was called up to march on the tiny fort. Once he was before the fort's defenses, Colonel Wallace ordered his men to fire a single volley. The power behind this one volley was enough to injure several dissenters and scare many into retreat. In the weeks following this brief confrontation, some forty men were arrested for the original assault upon Elias Robinson, while another thirty were brought up on charges of treason. In the end, all but one of these men were released, as the federal government only charged farm owner Lorenzo Blanchard (upon whose land the fort had been built) for high crimes of treason.<sup>111</sup>

Similarly, and unfolding within five days of the Battle at Fort Fizzle, between June 4<sup>th</sup> and June 10<sup>th</sup> a relatively small but telling instance of civil unrest erupted across rural Schuylkill County, in East Central Pennsylvania. From the online archives of a group dedicated to the collection of items from Pennsylvania's Civil War history, the Pennsylvania Volunteers of the Civil War, comes a letter written by Pennsylvania's Provost Marshal C. Tower, to Union Army Provost Marshall General, Colonel James B. Fry on June 10, 1863. In this letter written entirely by Provost Marshal Tower, a heavily detailed account relays this instance's sequence of events, as reported to him by subordinates who were present in the moment. As the report starts out, Provost Tower offers some context behind why he felt compelled to produce a report of this one incident. In speaking of recent events, Tower described several cases in which local enrolling officers in the towns of Hegins, Hubley, and Schuylkill (all within Schuylkill County) were assaulted by German and Irish residents. As mentioned several times in his report, Provost

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<sup>111</sup> Ohio Historical Society. Ohio Historical Markers. Erected in 2003. "3-38 Holmes County Draft Riots." *Remarkable Ohio*. <https://remarkableohio.org/index.php?category/773>.

Tower was not present during any of the assaults that were reported to his office; as a result, he was apprehensive about signing arbitrary arrest warrants. However, when an enrolling officer, Peter Kutz, produced an affidavit calling for the arrest of three men, Tower wrote “I deemed it improper to let this instance of assault pass unnoticed.” In turn, Provost Tower chose to charge three men of German descent, Christian Stutzman, Isreal Stutzman, and Abraham Bressler, with assault on a government official.<sup>112</sup>

Thus at 8 p.m. on June 8<sup>th</sup>, a posse comprised of Deputy Uriah Gane, Special Assistant James Bowen, Sergeant William Parks, and three other guardsmen left to execute the warrants, stopping at Bressler’s home first. It was recorded that these officials arrived at Bressler’s residence around midnight, and began to surround the home. As the Deputy and Bowen knocked on the front door, calling out to Bressler, two men, Abraham Reed and a hired hand, answered the door. They attempted to cover for Bressler, claiming he was not home. However, Bowen was said to know Bressler personally, immediately recognizing his voice from inside the house. At this point the two men closed the front door, and actively resisted. This was when Sergeant Parks and another guardsman stationed in the backyard, observed the back door of the house swing open and two men run out. Immediately Sergeant Parks and his fellow guardsman grabbed these men, who were identified as Bressler and Reed. But in the midst of the commotion these men freed themselves of Park’s and the other guardsman’s grip and fled back into the house. Escalating the situation further, upon fleeing, Sergeant Parks heard Bressler call for a rifle. As Sergeant Parks attempted to open the back door, he claimed to have seen a man holding a rifle, thus warranting the discharge of several shots from Parks, at the man inside the home. Within

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<sup>112</sup> Letter from Provost Marshal C. Tower to Provost Marshal General James B. Fry June 10, 1863. <http://www.pacivilwar.com/draftletter2.html>



moments Deputy Gane and James Bowen rushed to the backyard to aid Sergeant Parks. It was at this moment that Deputy Gane led a charge into the home and apprehended a man. As described in their accounts, the scene was extremely dark and soon the posse realized the man who they apprehended was not Bressler; instead Bressler had clearly jumped out of a window during the Deputy's charge.<sup>113</sup>

What followed was an interrogation of the family in an effort to reveal where Bressler may have fled to. As described in the letter, Bressler's wife spoke in German to her daughter, telling her that Bressler had fled to Trenton. Without the means to give chase in the middle of the night, the posse simply moved on to the Stutzman home, at which the Stutzmans were arrested without incident. The events of that night might have ended there, until when around 3 a.m. the posse in transit to the Deputy's office, intercepted Bressler coming down the very same road on horseback. As described in Provost Tower's letter, as the two parties passed each other, Deputy Gane leaped from his carriage and nearly knocked Bressler off of his horse. Although unsuccessful, Gane, Sergeant Parks, and a guardsman took off on foot after Bressler, shouting his name and even shooting at him. Nonetheless, Bressler was able to outrun them within a short period of time, leaving the agents empty-handed. In the aftermath of these events, as Provost Tower wrote on the 10<sup>th</sup>, Bressler was never found and both Stutzmans were transported to Philadelphia to stand trial. The previous enrolling officer, Peter Kutz, resigned out of fear, and his replacement immediately resumed calling up possible recruits in Bressler's neighborhood. Finally, as a result of the stiff response by law enforcement on the 8<sup>th</sup>, local residents now supported and were loyal to the Provost, and abided the Draft.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

It is clear from both of these accounts that the primary motivations behind each were resistance to the Draft. Indeed, so great was this motivation, that the men of Holmes County were willing to erect a fort and commit outright insurrection as a response. While the men of Schuylkill County were willing to assault federal agents and flee the county in an effort to dodge the Draft. But more profoundly, when looking at responses from law enforcement, a noticeably dynamic approach takes shape as the government was seen actively serving arrest warrants and then offering reconciliation. Consider the Battle at Fort Fizzle. During this instance no time was wasted by the federal government in dispatching troops to put down the insurrection. And indeed they did, with the force of arms and numbers. However, in the aftermath of the battle, terms of reconciliation were extended to dozens of those arrested—all were pardoned in exchange for the prosecution of one man Lorenzo Blanchard. Likewise, in Schuylkill County government officials like Provost Tower reached a tipping point when his subordinates came under attack by county residents unwilling to abide the Draft. The violence that characterizes this particular government response, came in the form of midnight raids on both the Bressler and Stutzman homes.

On a basic level these raids featured specific tactics that allude to a determined nature of policing. For instance, several armed men, one of whom was a civilian aiding the law, made their way unannounced to both men's homes in the dead of night. All of which, in combination with the gunfire effectuated during Bressler's attempted arrest, conjure a 'no-nonsense' and somewhat vengeful attitude behind law enforcement's actions. However, reconciliation was not offered as much as it was instituted. Once residents of Schuylkill County understood that local law enforcement would clamp down and forcefully arrest those engaged in dissent, the local populace switched sides and became ardent supporters of the Draft.

### Boston Draft Riot, 1863

Moving into the chaotic summer of 1863, social, racial, and labor strife was in the air. Indeed, what 1863 will come to be known for is a ‘domino effect’ of civil unrest across the North: effecting Ohio, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and both New York City and Buffalo, New York. However, the urban center of Boston was the first to exhibit the social force behind anti-draft sentiments held by urban residents. Compiled into an official report, now housed in the archives of Harvard College Library, a full account from the perspective of a Major Stephen Cabbot recounts in a high degree of detail the unrest that befell Boston during the same week as the New York City Draft Riots. Indeed, as the report stated, on July 14<sup>th</sup> a small draft riot occurred in Boston, Massachusetts, headed by both men and women of that city’s Irish working-class. In contrast to the mass destruction seen during New York City’s four-day riot, the riot in Boston occurred for only one day, left a handful dead, left all buildings (but the armory) untouched, and experienced a highly proactive and effective response from law enforcement entities. Nonetheless, sharing in the common cause of rejecting the Draft, the Irish of Boston committed themselves to violent protest.

Beginning during midday on Tuesday July 14<sup>th</sup>, two federal Draft agents Wesley Hill and David Howe, began to distribute draft notices by hand to local Bostonians. Going door to door in the city’s Irish working-class North side, the federal agents were berated by a particularly loud Irish woman who soon attracted the attention of all those around. As she followed and yelled at the agents, a great number of Irish workers walking home on the day’s lunch break were immediately drawn toward the commotion and began to harass the agents. At this point it was noted that the confrontation grew to such a level that federal agent Wesley Hill was forced to flee the area, but only at the cost of leaving his colleague David Howe at the mercy of the mob. As

Hill left the area, a policeman was drawn to the scene and committed himself to a bold effort to save Howe from being engulfed by the mob. What ensued, was a great trial by arms in which the policeman both fought the mob and dragged Howe to safety, ultimately emerging victorious, saving Howe's life.<sup>115</sup>

As the afternoon drew closer to evening the original group of violent Irish workers, home on lunch, grew to a mob of several hundred people. In response, Boston's police force preemptively armed and barricaded themselves in their own station, in hopes to receive reinforcements that would allow them to suppress the unrest quickly. In the meantime, it was noted that Massachusetts Governor John Andrew was presently attending a Harvard graduation ceremony nearby. Once he heard of the ensuing unrest, he quickly dispatched orders to all surrounding militia commanders, ordering them to send troops into Boston's North side. In turn, within one hour, three companies of militia marched into the North side. One of the most active companies, which would take center stage in this conflict, was commanded by Major Stephen Cabbot.<sup>116</sup> Major Cabbot and his men began by fortifying a defensive position in the local Copper Street Armory. Among the fortifications within this single building was a contingency plan that called for two cannons to be directly pointed at the opening of the doorway. This was to give an immediate advantage to the soldiers inside should the doors burst open in a worst-case scenario.<sup>117</sup>

In a relatively short period of time, the unruly mob comprised of men, women, and children convened outside of the armory doors and began to force their way in. As described in

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<sup>115</sup> Thomas H. O'Connor. *Civil War Boston Home Front and Battlefield*. Boston: Northeastern University Press 1997.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Stephen Cabbot. *Report of the "Draft Riot" in Boston, July 14th, 1863*. Cambridge: Harvard College Library 1923.

some of the more striking accounts, women in the mob could be seen carrying their babies; holding them up toward on-looking militiamen, daring them to shoot whilst holding their children. Nonetheless, the mob predominantly comprised of angry Irish men, began to bust windows and pry at the armory's door. Using pried up paving stones from the road, pickaxes, and sledge hammers, the mob made quick work of the armory doors. And as the situation unfolded, it became clear that the rioters were indeed going to bust through the door. In this instance Major Cabbot proceeded to give the order for both cannons to fire directly through the partially battered door. These shots were successful in warding off the angry mob, but as a result around ten people died in the firing, including young children. At this point, the mob backed off of the armory and began to march toward a local gun store with the intent of looting its weapons. However, when they reached their target, they were met by the Boston Police who fought them off until support from local militias arrived to turn the tide of the fight. After this second defeat, it was nighttime and a large number in the mob dispersed. This concluded the violence of the Boston Draft Riot, as on the next day the heavy presence of law enforcement and militia deterred any further unrest, showing that the increased presence of law enforcement played a decisive role in preventing death and destruction.<sup>118</sup>

In turn, when looking at the several moving parts behind this riot, from its beginning to end, the notion that immigrant communities were becoming deeply engaged in civil unrest as a result of the Draft is laid bare. For in this riot it was clearly Boston's working-class Irish who led the charge throughout. What is even more profound is the reason why; and perhaps the answer can be found in stipulations of the Draft regarding substitutes or three-hundred-dollar commutation fees. Both of which, participants of this riot could not take advantage of, thus

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

committing them to unrest. But more intriguingly was the role of women in this account. As mentioned in the very beginning, the instigating force behind the attack on agents Hill and Howe, was an old Irish woman. Indeed, this one woman, whose actions led to a violent city-wide riot, is rather profound as she is evidence of the building frustrations rife inside immigrant families as a whole, rather than just simply military-aged men. Thus showing that by the summer of 1863, immigrant families, including the women in them, felt the pangs of Civil War and played an integral role in resisting the Draft.

### New York City Draft Riots, 1863

Shifting a bit South, the New York City Draft Riots (1863) saw the reemergence of racism toward African Americans as a popular trend amongst white rioters; many of whom blamed blacks for the Civil War, economic hardships, and the Draft. Perhaps the most well-known case of civil unrest that displays a bloody combination of all three accusations against the black community was the New City Draft Riots. To begin, it is important to note that over the several days of rioting, the tallying of destroyed properties, incidents of racial violence, and number of deaths, was so numerous that historians of today are often left with mild estimates which infer that more carnage and destruction took place than could be accounted for. For instance, estimations indicate that nearly 70,000 residents of all backgrounds participated in the unrest. Fighting against them were all of the officers employed by New York's early police department, 3,000 soldiers of the New York State Militia, and 4,000 federal troops. However, when it comes down to the difficult task of estimating the total number of buildings, shops, and homes burned, many simply estimate a grand total to represent the destruction wrought on the city. Many scholars place their figure between one and six million dollars (in 1863). Finally, we can ascertain the lasting racial impact of these riots, from more tangible statistics, which indicate

that in the aftermath of the riots, New York City's black population fell to the lowest number since 1830, with 10,000 blacks residing in the city circa 1865.<sup>119</sup>

The beginnings of this colossal conflict clearly have their roots in the commonly felt anger toward the Draft Act of 1863 and what it was doing to the poor, working-class immigrant communities. However as previously mentioned, to understand the tangible grievances felt by white participants to this riot, the perspective of white men in the working-class must be revealed. For it was their social disposition and opposition to black equality that allowed racial violence to become synonymous with protesting the Draft. Thus, we reveal the ethnic and racial struggle within the workplace and job market itself. All across the North, beginning as early as 1830, blacks began to encroach on a predominantly white, unskilled job market. Indeed, for however many white business owners, factory owners, and bosses there were in early America, there existed an extraordinarily greater number of poor whites who depended on low-level jobs along the docks, in factories, and in textile mills. Among some of the long-term goals a member of the poor, unskilled, working-class could expect to achieve in this sort of life, was to feed their families, pay their landlords, and if recently immigrated, to send money back to family remaining in the homeland. Therefore, with the introduction of free blacks and ex-slaves into the low-level job market, this decades-old system upon which many whites depended was placed in jeopardy. Indeed, with the introduction of a new black workforce, worker protests and demands could be circumvented efficiently, wages could be lowered, and working conditions could stagnate. All of these possible results counter-acted decades of worker struggle, headed by

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<sup>119</sup> Leslie M. Harris. *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626–1863*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2003. pp. 271-290.

immigrants and poor whites, against *greedy business owners*<sup>120</sup> who sought to maximize profit at any cost. This is one of the great focal points from which the racial fallacy of white superiority emerged. For, from a white man's perspective in 1863, to advocate the suppression of black rights, equality, and jobs, was to simultaneously establish a sense of job security and protect one's livelihood.<sup>121</sup>

Therefore, with this underlying struggle in a constant state of problematic fluctuation for so many people, one can infer that once the Civil War broke out and the Draft Act had been enacted, racial violence was bound to erupt; and indeed it did from July 13<sup>th</sup> to July 16<sup>th</sup> in New York City, as Abraham Lincoln's 1863 Draft Act called up 300,000 New Yorkers for military service. Indeed, when referring to the draft that took place during mid-July in the City of New York, many of those called to arms were working-class men predominantly drawn from the scores of newly arrived immigrants and poor Anglo-Americans. As chronicled in *The Armies of the Streets, The New York City Draft Riots of 1863* by Adrian Cook, rioting had always been a part of life in New York City, with Cook suggesting that national holidays, religious celebrations, and elections were always accompanied by some level of riotous unrest. But more profoundly, Cook claimed that all groups of people, including blacks, had a track record of unrest in the big city, fighting for rights, freedom, wages, and much more. In short, Cook alluded to the notion that New York City was a hot bed for civil unrest, with a quasi-ritual of mob

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<sup>120</sup> \**Greedy or Cost Conscious*- In the competition of urban job markets, many businessmen such as Andrew Carnegie often used blacks to cross picket lines, or to incite violence from white strikers. That violence could in turn be the pretext for those factory owners to call upon a local judge to levy a legal injunction that would end the strike; effectively manipulating racial feelings as a business tactic to increase their power.

<sup>121</sup> *Uncovering the Real Gangs of New York*. Directed by Harry Hanbury. Produced by Discovery Channel 2003.



violence.<sup>122</sup> Thus what becomes apparent is that the Draft did serve as the initial issue, which doubled as the accelerant that facilitated a violent explosion of underlying racial tensions.

Beginning on Friday, July 11, 1863, the first round of roll call for the newly passed Draft Act commenced in Manhattan. Men of the working-class stood by peacefully as their fellow citizens were called up to service. However, over the weekend, tensions came to a boiling point as both working-class immigrants and Anglo-Americans alike voiced their fears and concerns should their name be called as well. They feared that they would be wrapped up in a conflict in which they had no stake, that they were to be victims and pawns in a ‘rich man’s war’, and that they would contribute to an already growing economic hardship in the form of job competition from freed blacks coming from the war-torn South. Thus at 10 a.m., on Monday July 13<sup>th</sup>, a mob of some five hundred people, headed by the famed ‘Black Joke’ fire company, proceeded to burn down the draft office from which Monday’s draft was to be read. Their efforts were successful, as law enforcement within the city was nearly nonexistent. For, aside from the relatively small police force charged with patrolling the city, New York’s militia and regular army units were deployed near Gettysburg during this time. In turn, even when another fire company came to put out the flames at the polling office, the mob attacked them and destroyed their equipment.<sup>123</sup>

Next on the scene to confront this unwavering mob was the Police Superintendent, John Kennedy. While overseeing the events alongside a small group of officers, he was assaulted and severely beaten by the mob. At this point, although the police were badly outnumbered, they engaged the mob with batons and pistols. But, as rioters gained the upper hand over the police, they began to target black neighborhoods and buildings throughout the city. Indeed, the office of

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<sup>122</sup> Adrain Cook. *Armies of The Streets, The New York City Draft Riots of 1863*. Lexington: University of Kentucky 1974. pp. 18-30.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

the New York Times, the Mayor's home, an Arsenal on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> street, a black orphanage, black tenements, dance halls, and brothels came under fire as the mob targeted them for their known sympathy toward blacks. In addition, the mob brutally attacked any people of color in sight, many of whom were beaten, killed, hung, and burned in what was a truly gruesome spectacle of savage racial violence.<sup>124</sup>

On Tuesday the next day, papers recorded that a great rain storm fell upon the city and deterred many rioters from taking to the streets once more. However, the rain was no obstacle for a small number of rioters who burnt down the homes of prison reformers, abolitionists, and black sympathizers. In addition to the unabated destruction, New York's Governor Horatio Seymour attempted to appeal to the rioters by casting his lot with them, claiming the Draft was unconstitutional in a public speech. Nonetheless, as the Governor spoke, his clandestine orders to move soldiers into the city were being carried out. The first of these arrived on that same day, with eight hundred infantrymen and sailors from surrounding military installations. The next day (Wednesday), more and more state and federal troops converged on the city. As these troops arrived and were dispatched to contend with numerous mobs across the city, order was slowly restored. However, on the final day (Thursday) a grand confrontation occurred in Gramercy Park, in which a bloody showdown between the army, police, and rioters left many injured and dead. Nonetheless, the agents of law enforcement prevailed and order was restored.<sup>125</sup>

Therefore, this event exhibited a notion that, to commit racial violence was to synonymously fight against the Draft Act. The best evidence of this conclusion were the people and buildings targeted during the unrest. In an analysis of the people attacked during this riot, it is easy to discern that the black community were the primary targets. But when speaking of the

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

specific buildings that came under attack, the mob actively targeted both black businesses, tenements, and orphanages, and also newspaper offices, the homes of abolitionists, and offices from where the Draft would be conducted. What is obviously common about all of these places, was their attitude or influence toward improving the general welfare of black people. For the stark trend throughout this riot was to attack businesses that catered to blacks, newspaper companies who sympathized with abolition or the Draft, individuals who politically or civically pushed for abolition, and the offices from which the Draft was to be read. Therefore, it is accurate to discern that New York City's riots were more than simply anti-Draft. For, social grievances steeped in racial tension and discontent for the Draft intertwined to motivate the mass destruction and violence wrought on the city. Thus the racially motivated element behind New York City's Riots of 1863, has been unveiled. Indeed, it is clear that racist ideology acted as a co-agitator alongside the negative public sentiment toward the Draft.

#### Charleston, Coles County Illinois Draft Riot, 1864

Lastly, we come to the Charleston Draft Riot of 1864. Found in Robert D. Samson's, *"Pretty Damned Warm Times": The 1864 Charleston Riot*, the story of a bloody clash between anti-war Democrats known as 'copperheads', local republicans, and Union soldiers of the 54<sup>th</sup> Infantry, took place in the square outside of the Coles County Courthouse. Taken from several March 28, 1863 editions in local newspapers, Samson analyzed the scene in front of the Coles County Courthouse on that day. It was bustling with Union soldiers home on leave, litigators continuously coming in and out of the courthouse, with a several hundred strong rally of anti-war Democrats just outside the court house doors. Thus the cycle of violence began when Democrat leaders heading the rally advised their attendees to disperse. In the process of dispersing, a fight broke out between a copperhead and a Union soldier. In what was a brief exchange, this single

fight triggered a much larger confrontation involving all those in the immediate vicinity. Within a brief window, elapsing over just ten minutes, dozens of Union soldiers, local residents, and copperheads opened fire on each other without pause. But when the smoke cleared, it was estimated that over one hundred shots had been fired, leaving twelve injured and nine dead.<sup>126</sup>

The next day (March 29<sup>th</sup>), some six hundred Union soldiers moved to occupy Charleston and the neighboring city of Mattoon. They began to launch raids, execute arrest warrants, and interrogate some fifty people in connection with the shootout on the previous day. Their results yielded twenty-nine arrests; however, over the coming months this case of civil unrest elicited another clamp down, as the matter garnered the focus of a worrisome President Lincoln. Lincoln foresaw that many residents in Illinois's Southernmost counties could potentially secede, cutting a line directly through Illinois and opening up a new war front. In turn, Lincoln took decisive action in June by suspending the right of habeas corpus from those twenty-nine arrested. Moreover, he had a federal escort transport them to a federal prison in Fort Delaware. However, later that year in November, and closer to the election of 1864, Lincoln came under immense pressure from the public to release the famed twenty-nine back into the care of the Coles County Sheriff. He did, and it was recorded that by the end of 1864, each of those arrested in connection to the Charleston Riot, were exonerated.<sup>127</sup>

### Conclusion of Part One: Connected Motivations

As this study concludes its attention to seven riots that plagued American cities and towns alike, a number of revelations have come about. For starters, the trying social questions of slavery and immigration, two nativist riots in 1844 and 1855, and the 1863 Draft Act have

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<sup>126</sup> Robert D. Samson. "'Pretty Damned Warm Times': The 1864 Charleston Riot and 'The Inalienable Right of Revolution'." *Illinois Historical Journal*, 1996, Vol. 89 No. 2. pp. 99-108.

<sup>127</sup> Samson. pp. 108-116.

undeniably set the stage for unrest in the 1860s by both occupying and directing the minds of riotous Americans, while simultaneously laying the social ground work for an eruption of civil unrest. However, what is more profound is the manner in which these issues in both society and the minds of Americans, manifested. Indeed, from 1861 to 1865 crowds of angry Americans committed seven riots that reflect increasing levels of violence, destruction, and specificity of targets, as the products of particular motivations wrought havoc across the North. Thus it is these motivations that must be emphasized in order to properly discern exactly how each case displays and proves a deep connection to not only the unique era surrounding the Civil War, but also to the larger issues defined across chapter two.

In Baltimore 1861, the motivations for unrest stemmed directly from both the slavery question and Know Nothing rhetoric aimed at opposing immigration. Consider that Lincoln, an abolitionist Republican, was elected seemingly against the will of Baltimore's residents who were sympathetic to Know Nothing rhetoric and the South. As previously mentioned, this ratio of disapproval reflected 1,100 votes for Lincoln and 28,900 votes opposing during the 1860 election. Therefore, when unsympathetic residents heard of Lincoln's victory, they felt as if their ballots had counted toward nothing. It was this motivating factor that spurred unrest in the first place. However, the situation would be exacerbated by coming face to face with an equally hated adversary in the form of German and Irish soldiers. Based on the following attack aimed at the German paper company the *Wecker*, one could infer that coming face of face with men of the Sixth Massachusetts spurred even further dissent as the sight of immigrants in Union uniforms passed by. In turn, the events of Baltimore can be seen to draw a direct influence from political disagreement with Lincoln's abolitionist sentiment, and the nativist beliefs that (as previously

mentioned in chapter two) clearly expressed advocacy for an active resistance to immigrant assimilation.

Next in 1863, the Detroit Race Riot revealed radical motivations of a racially charged nature. Indeed, the primary motivation behind Detroit's unrest stemmed from the highly discriminatory but socially acceptable status with which white Americans regarded black people. And in a sense the desire to reinforce a racially organized society was at the center of this riot. To reveal this assertion, one needs only to refer to the racially biased residents and newspapers of 1860s Detroit, as they are the facilitators of this racial unrest. Brought on by the paper's incorrect stereotyping of a dark skinned man charged with sexual assault on two white girls, whites of all backgrounds turned out to reinforce racial superiority and threaten the man on trial. However, this is not all, as more concrete evidence that the belief of racial superiority was at the center of this riot, can be seen in the accidental death of a German, Charles Langer, at the hands of local guardsmen protecting the trial. In reference to the account, once the mob had realized that a white man had been killed over what they perceived to be a black man's trial, they immediately targeted the black community in an act of revenge. Thus firmly placing racial hatred at the center of unrest. Reflecting the same racial hate that occupied and festered in the minds of pro-slavery Americans throughout the nineteenth century.

However, when looking at motivations behind the Holmes County and Schuylkill County Draft Riots (both in June 1863), it is clear that the institution of the Draft was the central issue. Evidence of this can be seen in the nature of unrest. For instance, the construction of Fort Fizzle on the farm of Lorenzo Blanchard was a firm statement (no matter how long it took Colonel Wallace to rout its inhabitants) against what was perceived to be a tyrannical government. While the rioters in Schuylkill County displayed a willingness to rebel, attack federal agents, and even

flee the county (as Bressler did in the dead of night) in their efforts to stifle and avoid conscription. But beyond the nature of unrest, were the physical targets of both mobs, both of which were enrolling officers. In Holmes County, it was Elias Robinson, a draft agent, who was brutally beaten in an initial confrontation with locals. Likewise, in Schuylkill County, it was Peter Kutz, another enrolling officer attacked by locals in an initial confrontation. Thus with the nature of unrest and the physical targets of each mob identified in relation to these two cases, there is no question that the Draft sat at the core of what motivated/spurred these rioters to action.

Another incident that spawned unrest as a result of the Draft, was the Boston Draft Riot in July 1863. When looking at the nature of unrest in this case, there are several similarities to the events of Holmes and Schuylkill County. For instance, all three featured large groups of working-class immigrants (in Boston's case predominantly Irish) in active resistance against local police, draft agents, and the state militia. However, in Boston, the mob was able to retain control of the situation for a longer period of time, and thus even further acts of violence commenced at both an arsenal and gun store. Nonetheless, the similarities resume when looking at the initial targets of this unrest —two enrolling officers, David Howe and Wesley Hill. Both of whom met the same opposition that Elias Robinson and Peter Kutz had in June (1863). In turn, one can certainly see that Boston's Draft Riot was also firmly centered around the Draft.

Next, when looking at the events that devastated New York City in July of 1863, things become slightly complicated. Instead of one motivating grievance, this specific case came under the direction of two constantly interchanging influences —the Draft at first and targeted racial violence second. Based on the account provided, the notion that New York City's riot began over the Draft is correct. Evidence of this initial motivation can be seen in an instance when the Black

Joke fire company led a mob of New Yorkers in burning an office from which the Draft was to be read. However, this initial encounter spiraled as racial tensions heightened. Indeed, within a short time frame conspiracies blaming blacks for the Civil War, economic hardships, and the Draft festered and spilled out into the streets in the form of appalling violence. In the aftermath the destruction and death that littered the streets reflected an amalgamation of motivations that tend to be remembered most for their racial elements. Thus placing the issue of the Draft alongside fervent social issues over racial equality and racial superiority (ultimately stemming from the slavery question), as what precisely motivated rioters in New York.

Lastly, when dissecting the motivations for the Coles County riot in Charleston Illinois (1864), it is clear that controversial issues surrounding the Draft, are what primarily raised tensions in the moments prior to an outbreak of violence. However, this initial motivation was not the primary instance that set off the physical violence seen that day. Drawing from Robert Samson's account, the nature of unrest appears to have been derived from growing tensions between copper heads and off-duty Union soldiers. In fact, Samson's own assessment revealed that these two groups had been clashing ideologically and sometimes physically in the streets of Charleston, prior to March 28<sup>th</sup>. Nonetheless on that day a particular scene was brewing in front of the county courthouse. As described, a copperhead rally of an anti-Draft sentiment was underway, drawing the attention of many off-duty Union soldiers in the area. The presence of this rally is very telling in itself, as local Democrats were seen actively protesting the Draft in mass. However, this protest was not the facilitator of violence. In fact, one cannot view the Draft as the sole motivator behind this case of unrest, as the accounts clearly refer to a singular fight between a copperhead and Union soldier as the flashpoint from which dozens of other Union soldiers, residents, and copperheads fired upon each other without pause. Thus we can conclude



that the events of Charleston, Illinois were in part influenced and even staged by resistance to the Draft, while the physical violence was clearly motivated by both preexisting and situational frictions between copperheads and Union soldiers.

Therefore, with each case's correspondence to specific motivating issues during both the Antebellum period and Civil War-era revealed, this study can assert a number of things. First, that the slavery question, its numerous political and social clashes across the nineteenth century, resulted in a perfect storm during the 1860s —setting the stage for unrest on both an individual level, with ideas of racial superiority, and on a national level, with ideas of secession and Civil War. The second assertion is that the immigration question effected a similar societal friction as that of the slavery question. Simply put, large swaths of Protestant-Anglo Americans took an opposing stance against whole groups of people, mainly Irish and German immigrants —an opposition that clearly defined itself in organizations like the ARA, APA, the Order of the Star Spangled Banner, and the Know Nothing Party. All of which were responsible for the violence brought to Irish and German residents during both Philadelphia's (1844) and Cincinnati's Nativist Riots (1855). Lastly, the third assertion is that the Enrollment Act of 1863 was the singular most pivotal event upon which the severity and frequency of civil unrest increased. This is clearly discernable as incidents beyond March 3, 1863 reflect a specifically anti-draft sentiment —characterized by attacks on enrolling officers and offices of enrollment. Thus these conclusions come at the expense of a thorough investigation into the intrinsic connection between two nineteenth century social questions, two nativist riots, the Draft in 1863 and seven riots during the 1860s. However, to corroborate these assertions about influence and levels of contribution, two new and unheard of riots from the annals of Buffalo history must be brought forth.

## Introduction to Part Two: The Buffalo Riots

It was two in the afternoon on August 11, 1862, in front of the Western Transportation Company's dock on the corner of Ohio and Water Streets. As Officers Darcy, Kent, and Marvel of the Buffalo Police Department gazed upon a crowd of nearly two hundred striking stevedores, they could not imagine the bedlam that would ensue by days' end. The officers had been dispatched to the area in order to gather information relating to reports made to the Chief of police, Chief Drullard. Beginning at ten in the morning that day, Buffalo residents reported that a large mob of German and Irish laborers passed by their homes in protest for higher wages. As the three officers observed what seemed at first to be a peaceful protest, they began to head back to their station. But through a quick turn of events they were forced to retake their positions overlooking the mob.<sup>128</sup>

The officers' attention was drawn back to the scene as a noticeably more animated crowd began to seize and bust open barrels of lager beer, drinking freely from them as a man vigorously played a flute in the background. The fear felt by on-looking residents as well as the three officers heightened as another man climbed atop a lumber pile and began giving a speech of anti-government and anti-American rhetoric, in German. An example of what exactly made this sight so striking was recorded in the Buffalo *Morning Express*, in it the man's speech was taken as, "Violent, incendiary, with a republican harangue<sup>129</sup>." Thus, as these men bonded into a singular cohesive unit, unified through shared beer and struggle, they began to troll Buffalo Harbor in search for their co-workers still hard at work. Their goal—to violently coerce any low-level workers (not engaged in protest) to quit their jobs and join the march. This harassment of their

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<sup>128</sup> "Serious Riot of Dock Laborers." Buffalo *Morning Express*. August 12, 1862: 3

<sup>129</sup> \**Republican Harangue*- accounts in this instance portrayed this particular public oration, as one of anti-government and ethnically unifying statements.

fellow dockworkers would grow violent, proceeding unchecked throughout the day until five in the afternoon, when police Chief Drullard appeared at the head of a seven-man group of officers. The Chief and his posse confronted the mob and ordered it to disperse. As the mob began to disappear the police began rounding up and arresting its ring leaders. In the moment, three men were charged for inciting this unrest. Chief among them was a man named James Flaherty, Supervisor of Buffalo's (Irish dominated) First Ward. The other two, both the flute player and orator who stood atop the lumber pile (both of German descent), were also charged.<sup>130</sup>

Although the initial appeals by Chief Drullard were successful at dispersing the mob for a short while, the mob became spited and restless. Indeed, as the mob watched as a handful of unarmed policemen prepared to haul away their most revered members to jail, a primal irony set in. Here was a mob more than triple the size of, and equally armed as the policemen in front of them. Indeed, the mob realized it had made a grave mistake by not resisting the police, when it could have easily done so, and with impunity. In turn, within the hour the mob had gathered reinforcements and renewed a bold offensive aimed at freeing their arrested ring leaders. This renewed effort met law enforcement at the corner of Chicago and Elk Streets, where the mob began throwing stones and bricks at a column of officers walking prisoners to their station's holding center. Chief Drullard was at the end of the column protecting his men from the mob when the situation became deadly. For this entire time, the mob had been hurling projectiles from a distance, but at this moment two rioters ran full force at the Chief and his men, the Chief responded alone by swinging his walking cane over the first man's head with all of his might. As Drullard's cane broke over one assailant's head, the other immediately knocked the him to the ground, striking his knee and head with stones. As the Chief lay on the ground, bloodied and face

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<sup>130</sup> Buffalo *Morning Express*. Aug 12, 1862: 3.

to face with violent rioters, the other officers in the column mustered their courage and charged into the crowd in a harrowing effort to rescue their Chief.<sup>131</sup>

Although this is a brief rendition of what would ultimately be the opening scene to Buffalo's first riot, much is revealed about the intensity of the situation. Indeed, from this snippet we see different perspectives from Buffalo's bourgeois, immigrant dockworkers, and a determined police force as each group reacted to the violence. For instance, fearful bourgeois residents cowered as social norms and a rigid class structure degenerated into violence. While Buffalo's immigrant stevedores regarded their circumstances as historically unfair and deserving of reconciliation at any cost. Lastly, Buffalo's early police force can be seen struggling to maintain even the slightest perception of law and order, and without any assistance from the state.

Nonetheless, a second outbreak of civil unrest occurred in the following year, on July 6, 1863. In comparison, the 1863 riot was much larger and would be led by Buffalo's Irish laborers, rather than its German stevedores. The 1863 riot also featured the first deaths caused by either riot—sparked by the shooting of a white man by an African American in broad daylight. Thus as previously mentioned, a dive into the events themselves, with the intent to showcase both similarities and differences with other instances of civil unrest will be rendered. And indeed many of the questions asked here will come to focus on the individual. For instance, these accounts and the subsequent examination will strive to show who these riotous individuals were, what tensions they dealt with on a daily basis, what social grievances motivated their violent actions, and what changes were implemented in the city of Buffalo in the wake of these riots?

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<sup>131</sup> Buffalo *Morning Express*. Aug 12, 1862: 3.

To accomplish this task, firsthand accounts from those who witnessed both the August and July riot will be employed. Indeed, aided by columns published in both the August 12, 1862 and July 7, 1863 editions of the Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, Buffalo *Morning Express*, and Buffalo *Courier*, a unique and first time opportunity to discern what physically occurred moment by moment during Buffalo's riots, is possible. Therefore, with the greatly appreciated assistance of Cynthia Van Ness, Director of Library and Archives at the Buffalo History Museum, six newly discovered editions from these contemporary sources, will have their first opportunity to be rediscovered and chronicled in this work; and especially for all those interested in Buffalo's history.

However, prior to an examination of these two events, it is beneficial to provide some idea of the how social forces (discussed previously in chapter two) influenced Buffalo and its residents. Beginning with immigrants; which by 1860 saw nearly six million Irish and German immigrants come to the United States.<sup>132</sup> A fraction of which came in an abundance to Buffalo particularly between 1850 and 1851.<sup>133</sup> Indeed these immigrants would create a foothold in the city as both groups would account for 57% of all Buffalo households in 1855 (18% Irish<sup>134</sup> and 39% German<sup>135</sup>). With this influx, conflicts surrounding living conditions, moral depravity, labor, and opposing cultures, sat at the center of annual social conflicts in Buffalo. Moreover, when looking specifically at motivating social grievances pertaining to Buffalo's Irish and German immigrants alike, the arena from which conflict frequently boiled over was labor.

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<sup>132</sup> Ryan W. Keating. "Immigrants in the Union Army." *Essential Civil War Curriculum*. San Bernardino: California State University, 2004. pp. 2-3.

<sup>133</sup> David Gerber. *The Making of An American Pluralism: Buffalo, New York 1825-60*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989. pp 122.

<sup>134</sup> Gerber, 92.

<sup>135</sup> Gerber, 143.

As alluded to in David Gerber's *Making of an American Pluralism*, Buffalo had a habitual problem with immigrant labor. Ever since the 1840s nativist sentiments and little worker rights combined to produce false job descriptions and advertisements, underpayment, deferential payment, and poor work hours.<sup>136</sup> This resulted in a number of social reactions that reveal a history of protests and strikes in early Buffalo. For instance, between 1849 and 1858 numerous associations, labor unions, and guild start-ups organized to hold protests, demonstrations, and strikes.<sup>137</sup> And although each one would be met with failure, their persistent reemergence is evidence of both labor and class conflict, especially within Buffalo's immigrant communities.

Some of the most notable incidents that are telling and mentioned in Gerber's work were: the Towpath Rebellion of 1849 (in which six hundred striking Irish canal workers fought a local militia when strikebreakers were brought in to resume work)<sup>138</sup>, the Printers Strike of 1854 (peacefully achieved Sundays off for employees of newspaper companies by forcing Buffalo's newspapers to eliminate Monday editions)<sup>139</sup>, and the 1858 Work or Bread Demonstration (that saw hundreds of poor Irish from the First and Eighth Wards march on the Mayor's home to demand the government create jobs or hand out food to the poor.)<sup>140</sup> Thus what is clear about Buffalo prior to the events of 1862 and 1863, is that it was indeed rife with class division, nativism, and recurrent unrest. All of which sprouted from a volatile cycle of labor—repeatedly exploiting immigrants until they explode in an aggressive protest, strike, or demonstration.

Next, perhaps the greatest underlying issue that influenced Buffalo's unrest was a racial superiority that manifested from a long legacy of both direct and indirect issues relative to the

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<sup>136</sup> Gerber, 243.

<sup>137</sup> Gerber, 274.

<sup>138</sup> Gerber, 254.

<sup>139</sup> Gerber, 108.

<sup>140</sup> Gerber, 259.

fight for and against slavery. And in fact riotous Buffalonians in 1863 will come to espouse desires to uphold a racially organized society through violence. Evidence of this can be found across the 1863 account itself but to establish a preexisting sentiment amongst Buffalo's citizenry, this study turns to a passage in which David Gerber describes the controversial nature of the slavery question as it relates to Buffalo's bourgeois class:

...particularly in the 1840s, on slavery, increasingly the national issue of the day. The dominant approach in wide circles of the class was cautious and moderate, rejecting abolition and radical formulations of antislavery, but maintaining, via colonization and schemes for voluntary, compensated emancipation, a mild, if largely implicit, criticism of slavery. Slavery did, of course, contradict many of the tenets of bourgeois economic and political ideology, and in upholding that ideology, they indirectly helped to divorce North from South, politically and ideologically.... in the 1850s, the escalation of the sectional controversy began inexorably to chip away at consensus and paved the way for a significant political cleavage with the bourgeoisies.... No sizeable fragment of the class would come to espouse abolitionism.<sup>141</sup>

In turn, what must be taken from this passage is a similar conclusion to Thomas Jefferson's quote in 1820—that although Americans recognized that great injustices were being done to Africans, a large 'consensus' was held on maintaining the economy created around slavery. And, as is clearly discernable this sentiment was present in decades just prior to the events of 1863.

Lastly, another major issue of the time was the constant demand for soldiers and the subsequent Enrollment Act on March 3, 1863. Although its larger goal, to raise men and push back the seemingly unstoppable Confederacy, seemed like a small step in the pathway to realizing a noble victory, the Draft was the principal agitator in breeding new social grievances against the government. Furthermore, it can be seen across part one of chapter three, that this specific document ignited preexisting tensions of a racial and xenophobic nature across the Union. However, when diving into part two of this chapter, it will become obvious that the Draft

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<sup>141</sup> Gerber, 89-90.

did not play a significant role in Buffalo's unrest. And, perhaps this can be attributed to Bishop Timon's massive effort to promote unity and support for the Union amongst Buffalo's Catholic community.<sup>142</sup> But nonetheless, as both accounts will soon confirm, the Draft was not a primary factor of motivation behind either case of unrest.

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<sup>142</sup> Riforgiato, Leonard R. "Bishop Timon, Buffalo and the Civil War." *Catholic Historical Review* 1987, Vol. 73, No.1, pp. 62-80. ushistory.org. 2019. *Irish and German Immigration*. <http://www.ushistory.org/us/25f.asp>.



### The Stevedore Riot of August 11, 1862

According to the Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, Buffalo *Morning Express*, and the Buffalo *Courier*, this riot was predominately led by the city's German community, with minor help from their Irish coworkers. Known as stevedores these workers were a branch of the unskilled job market along Buffalo's docks. In a brief sense, their jobs required them to partake in the labor-intensive process that was loading and unloading ships, both coming and going into port. To grasp this 'scene at the docks' more vividly an excerpt from David Gerber's work *The Making of an American Pluralism*, describes the wide variety of services and occupations that surrounded Buffalo's import-export economy:

...forwarding cargos between markets, warehousing, ship chandlery, breaking down bulk packaging, brokering in maritime insurance... by 1855 [the docks] employed 1,300 riggers, joiners, carpenters, painters, and finishers... metal craftsmen making fittings, boilers, and engines for the lake and canal fleets. All of these activities created a vast, interconnected sector of managerial, lower white-collar, skilled, and unskilled, outdoor, employment dependent for its livelihood on the lake and canal trade.<sup>143</sup>

Thus it was within this work environment, that all three newspaper companies pinpoint the origins of this issue squarely on wage disputes. In short, the German and Irish stevedores 'officially' received a standard pay of 25¢ per hour, but in reality, often went home with 20¢ or less per hour. In turn, the feeling of being cheated out of their money quickly set in and the stevedores decided to go on strike. Beginning at 10 a.m., on August 11, 1862, a group of disgruntled German stevedores began that strike, marching outside of Plimpton's Dock in protest of unfair wages and also those who chose to continue working for minimal pay. It was not long before the strikers started to verbally and physically assault those laborers still at work. These

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<sup>143</sup> Gerber, 7.

actions quickly drew the attention of Buffalo's early unarmed police, and with minimal force, the 10 a.m. strike was dispersed.<sup>144</sup>

However, later that day at 2 p.m. and with Irish support, Buffalo's stevedores organized another rally consisting of nearly two hundred. At this point, each company's column began to reveal a degree of bias, especially when it came to the portrayal of both the German crowd and its leading actors. For instance, according to the Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser* a known Whig/nativist paper,

[at 2.p.m.]A staggering procession of stevedores again formed near the same locality, marched down Ohio and Water streets, halted near Western Transportation Company's warehouse, among the lumber, and were edified by a German of unpleasant aspect, who harangued the crowd from a lumber pile.<sup>145</sup>

Similarly, in interviews given during the aftermath to journalists with the Buffalo *Morning Express*, another mildly nativist narrative appears. In explaining events that occurred just before the renewed protest at 2 p.m., Officers Darcy, Kent, and Marvel of the Buffalo Police recounted their observations as they looked on from a nearby vantage point,

They found a gathering of perhaps two hundred or more German and Irish laborers, which was being addressed in German by a man standing upon a lumber pile, with a keg of lager beer upon one side of him, from which the crowd drank freely during the speech, while upon the other side of the orator, two men were vigorously dancing to the music of a flute, furnished by an evil looking, one-eyed performer.<sup>146</sup>

All while the Buffalo *Courier*, a Democrat paper, showed sympathy toward the stevedore's cause. In fact, the Buffalo *Courier's* account was overall written to portray the immigrant workers in as much of an unbiased manner as possible. Resisting the introduction of ethnic

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<sup>144</sup> "The Riot Yesterday Morning! Again." Buffalo *Courier*, Aug 12, 1862: 3

<sup>145</sup> "Riot Among the Stevedores- Bravery of the Police." Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, August 12, 1862: 3

<sup>146</sup> Buffalo *Morning Express*, Aug 12, 1862: 3.

prejudices or stereotypes in their writing. In turn, their August 12<sup>th</sup> edition reflected their own agenda by appearing sympathetic to the plight of the stevedores, while praising the bravery of Buffalo's policemen, something their Bourgeois readers would be pleased to see. Nonetheless, this dual stance can first be seen in their choice of words, especially in the beginning of their article in which they explain the stevedore wage issue, ultimately coming down in favor of the stevedores. The Buffalo *Courier* wrote:

The principal cause of dissatisfaction has been that instead of receiving 25¢ an hour for their services, they have been paid 20¢, which some of them[stevedores] were disposed to find fault with.<sup>147</sup>

Returning to the scene at the lumber pile in front of the Western Transportation Company, as flutes played and people drank to a fiery speech in their native German dialect, each paper's rendition of initial thoughts and sights on scene, was kept dry and simple. The Buffalo *Courier* simply recorded that it looked like a "Jolly occasion".<sup>148</sup> However, both the Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser* and Buffalo *Morning Express* absorbed a much different feeling from both officers and Buffalonians who later told their side of the story. In reference to the orator's speech atop the lumber pile, these witnesses told the Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*:

He[the main orator] is said by those who were present to have uttered violent and incendiary words conveying the idea that the Yankees were in league against the foreigners, to make them do their fighting.<sup>149</sup>

As for the Buffalo *Morning Express*, they recorded that the orator:

Argued that the Yankee rich men were in league against the foreign poor men. [he said] The latter must combine to protect themselves and urged that as the first step

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<sup>147</sup> Buffalo *Morning Express*, Aug 12, 1862: 3.

<sup>148</sup> Buffalo *Courier*, Aug 12, 1862: 3.

<sup>149</sup> Buffalo *Commerical Advertiser*, Aug 12, 1862: 3.

in that direction and to show their resolution, the laborer should improve the present opportunity.<sup>150</sup>

In turn, the bias of the Buffalo *Courier* is reflected in their neglect to record neither the reaction of onlookers nor the fiery rhetoric that motivated further dissent amongst Buffalo's German stevedores. Indeed, the Buffalo *Morning Express* and the Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser* portrayed the German strikers in an unfavorable light, describing them with popular immigrant stereotypes of the time period —unclean, unintelligent, street fighting, and hard-drinking people.

Proceeding forward with Officers Darcy, Kent, and Marvel's testimonies, after observing and then leaving the scene with a definite feeling that Buffalo's docks were a ticking time bomb, the officers went back to their station to report and strategize. Meanwhile back at the docks, every newspaper reported that the mob began to march up and down the docks, harassing, grabbing, and pulling men from nearby warehouses until their ranks swelled. It was also recorded in the *Courier* that even peaceable working men were forced into the cause. This aggressive behavior was challenged when a fight broke out on the deck of the Steamer Eclipse, which was unloading its cargo at that moment. The fight broke out when workers aboard the Eclipse refused the stevedore's demands to join their march.<sup>151</sup>

Nonetheless, combined with the mob's assault on other workers, including those on the steamer's crew, and pressure from Buffalo's fearful bourgeois, the Buffalo police were given lawful grounds to forcefully end the strike. Thus, at 5 p.m. Buffalo Police Chief Drullard arrived with his entire day and night force —a total of eight men including the Chief. The officers confronted the numerically superior mob of German stevedores and urged them to disperse. However, the German orator from the lumber pile, and the Irishman James Flaherty, Supervisor

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<sup>150</sup> Buffalo *Morning Express*, Aug 12, 1862: 3.

<sup>151</sup> Buffalo *Courier*, Aug 12, 1862: 3.

of the First Ward, defied the order and in turn were arrested without incident. But almost immediately as these two ring leaders went into cuffs, members of the mob attacked the policemen, freeing Flaherty but not the orator.<sup>152</sup>

As the German orator was hauled to District No. 1's station house, the mob gained reinforcements of both Irish and German workers, and proceeded to gather at the corner of Ohio and Chicago Streets under the command of the German flute player and Flaherty from earlier. As the now rioters, moved toward Washington Square, the Chief and his officers met them again and urged them to disperse. When the entire mob openly refused, the Chief had the flute player, along with other ring leaders arrested, and proceeded to march them back to the district station house.<sup>153</sup>

On their march down Ohio Street, the group of officers came under attack from bricks and other stones, hurled by the rioters. The officers were able to keep their discipline while under fire, but order was quickly broken when a portion of the mob attacked the Chief. It was recorded that the Chief was at the back of the line protecting his officers from stones, when he was forced to bash his walking cane over the head of a rioter who was maliciously running toward him. As his cane broke upon impact with the charging man, the Chief was hit in the head and knee with stones and fell to the ground bleeding.<sup>154</sup>

As the other officers witnessed this onslaught, they immediately joined the fight which they knew would not end in their favor. This is when all of the newspapers recognized the actions of Officer Darcey, who upon his return from moving prisoners to the station, furnished a revolver that gave the upper hand to the police. It was noted that Darcey acquired this pistol

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<sup>152</sup> *Buffalo Morning Express*, Aug 12, 1862: 3.

<sup>153</sup> *Buffalo Morning Express*, Aug 12, 1862: 3.

<sup>154</sup> *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, Aug 12, 1862: 3.

while processing a criminal into jail.<sup>155</sup> Interestingly, prior to 1863, Buffalo's Police Department was an unarmed force. The riot of 1862 would change the department's policy.

As Darcey ran into the fray, he hesitated to fire on the crowd until he was implored by his fellow officers as they shouted "Shoot Charley!"<sup>156</sup> Darcey fired one shot that went through the neck of the man directly in front of him, grazing the head of another behind him. As both men collapsed from their wounds, the mob jumped back in shock and ceased fighting. At this point Darcey realized that his revolver had jammed, but not showing any signs of weakness, he kept the crowd at bay with the threat of another shot. This allowed the Chief and other officers to pile into the nearby home of a woman referred to as 'Welch', for protection. Simultaneously, another Officer by the name of Reynolds, had been badly injured and taken into the Central Freight Railroad Office across the street, where office workers barred the doors shut, and called for a train to make a special emergency pick up.<sup>157</sup>

As the officers took refuge in their respective locations, Officer Darcey was able to escape the area, unjam his gun, and acquire a carriage. But before Darcey could return, the situation became dire as the mob began to focus entirely on the Welch house where the battered Chief resided. This renewed attention on the Chief came after Reynolds and other officers were able to escape the area aboard a train, called in by the Freight Railroad employees.<sup>158</sup> This is where all of the papers noted Darcey's heroism once again, as his actions were the deciding factor in saving the Chief's life. Most notably, the Buffalo *Courier* praised his efforts when it wrote:

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<sup>155</sup> Buffalo *Commerical Advertiser*, Aug 12, 1862: 3.

<sup>156</sup> Buffalo *Commerical Advertiser*, Aug 12, 1862: 3.

<sup>157</sup> Buffalo *Commerical Advertiser*, Aug 12, 1862: 3.

<sup>158</sup> Buffalo *Courier*, Aug 12, 1862: 3.

With revolver in one hand, he drove his horse through the crowd and rescued Mr. Drullard from his precarious situation...It required a man of nerve for the occasion, and young Dan Darcey was just the man.<sup>159</sup>

After this devastating defeat and retreat of the police, made possible by the heroic acts of Officer Darcey, the police regrouped at their station to arm themselves with revolvers. They confronted the violent mob once more and were easily able to apprehend fourteen people and cease all further dissent. Later that night, the mayor ordered that three companies of militia be made ready for action in anticipation of a riot the next day, but they were never needed. The next day the police patrolled the docks with revolvers and arrested anyone who was deemed dissident. Lastly, all three newspapers commended the bravery of all the officers, especially Darcey, and called for the arming and doubling of the Buffalo's police.<sup>160</sup>

Discernable from this account, the chief motivating factor in facilitating 1862's unrest was an issue that in a general sense, did not spark out-right violence in previous incidents covered in this study. For as the U.S. moved into an era of mass industrialization, the issue of fair wages followed close behind, gaining more and more steam. Nonetheless, as it pertains to the late nineteenth century, Buffalo's riot in August of 1862 was facilitated by a consciously exploitive business practice that began to meet worker resistance as early as the 1850s.

In addition to fiery concerns over fair wages, another major grievance here was local opposition to the police presence and tactics. As related in the first section of these three accounts, the physical assaults began when the Supervisor of the First Ward in Buffalo, James Flaherty and other ring leaders were arrested. Indeed, it was in the very midst of the first arrests, in which the crowd of stevedores became confrontational. To add further credence to this notion we can point to the second, and greater, clash between police and rioters at 5 p.m.. In fact, what

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<sup>159</sup> Buffalo *Courier*, Aug 12, 1862: 3.

<sup>160</sup> Buffalo *Morning Express*, Aug 12, 1862: 3.

becomes apparent from the second clash is a pattern of violence. Perhaps the most notable instance within the riot that exposes this, was when Officer Darcey fired a revolver into the crowd. Although the rioters were pushed back by the shot, they renewed their attack once the police appeared vulnerable again. Thus, derived from their willingness to fight on, even when presented and effected with deadly force, the rioters clung to and continued to act on a high degree of animosity toward the police —placing this sentiment as a strong, but secondary, motivational grievance. But more profoundly to further understand the animosity between immigrants and Buffalo's police in 1862, a brief look at the ethnic composition of inmates housed in Erie County Jails between 1840 and 1860 is pertinent in proving friction between law enforcement and immigrants —during which (1840-1860) 28% to 43% of inmates were Irishmen.<sup>161</sup>

Next, an assessment of the violent actions displayed in this riot leads to mixed conclusions. When compared to other riots, such as those mentioned in chapters two and three, Buffalo's violence was dwarfed. This notion is primarily based on the fact that rioters in other large urban centers like Baltimore, Detroit, New York, and Boston, used pistols and muskets as their standard tools in exacting their will. However, in Buffalo, rioters used their fists, rocks, and paving stones; causing a radically different progression of events that did not fall in their favor. In hindsight, when considering the violent backdrop behind Buffalo's riot of 1862, Buffalo's progression of violence appears unconventional —reflecting a valiant but futile effort that quickly deescalated due to the usage of only fists and stones. In fact, drawn from these newspaper columns, Buffalo Police were the only actors to fire a gun over the entirety of the altercation. In addition to this relatively low level of violence, no buildings were burned, no one

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<sup>161</sup> Gerber, 132.



had been killed, and order was restored within a twenty-four-hour period. Thus in the aftermath, one of the only noticeable changes (as a direct result of the riot) to the fabric of the city, was the enlargement and arming of Buffalo's metropolitan police force.

Next, this analysis should look at clear biases seen in the Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, *Morning Express*, and *Courier*. For instance, it was evident that the *Commercial Advertiser* and the *Morning Express* sought to demonize the German stevedores. Although this particular episode featured a heavier emphasis on German workers, rather than the Irish ones, it is clear at times that the Irish were also lumped into something of a vile, drunken, and anti-American persona. Indeed, this is made distinctly clear as writers at both the *Commercial Advertiser* and *Morning Express*, published unfavorable descriptions of those immigrants involved in the unrest, describing their marching as 'staggering', their appearance as an 'unpleasant aspect', their speeches as 'republican harangues', and conjuring up an image of the 'evil looking, one-eyed performer'.

In contrast, the Buffalo *Courier* offered a complacent sentiment, hinting at their approval in this case of unrest. For instance, as previously mentioned, in the beginning of the *Courier's* column, "The Riot Yesterday Morning! Again," the company's writers clearly laid out the grievance over fair wages, closing with 'some of them[workers] were disposed to find fault with'. In addition to this complacency, when describing the gathering atop a lumber pile (which the *Commercial Advertiser* and the *Morning Express* labeled as near anarchy) the *Courier* referred to it as a 'jolly occasion'. In turn, we can see how these three different columns harbored both nativist biases and immigrant sympathies.

Lastly, although these three paper companies produced their stories based on counteracting views, they each did something truly intriguing —supporting the brave actions of

the Buffalo Police. Indeed, without a doubt columnists employed with each publication stood on the side of law enforcement. In fact, when looking at the broader message within each column, the actions of police officers are emphasized in special detail that certainly overshadows the underlying struggles of immigrants, workplace grievances, and so on. This is discernable from the inclusion of captivating moments centered around the actions of law enforcement. In specific these moments are captured in: The *Courier's* coverage of Officer Dan Darcy's willingness to plunge himself into the throngs of danger armed with a partially functional revolver, the *Express's* recreation of the epic hand to hand combat between the Police Chief and some of the rioters, and the *Commercial's* vividly exciting quote "Shoot Charley!". Therefore, although this event of civil unrest comes to serve as an illumination in the lineage of deeper struggles like workplace grievances and cultural frictions within a city, the overall message gathered from the presentation, content, and emphasis within each column, suggests that at the end of the day the majority of Buffalonians believed in exacting change from within the system, and not through mob violence.

Finally, in conjunction with crucial details in David Gerber's book, this study will be able to firmly place the significance of Buffalo's Stevedore Riot. As mentioned in Gerber's work, Buffalo's ship carpenters set the standard for what a successful protest looked like and could achieve. For instance, Buffalo's ship carpenters were regarded as the top-paying positions in Buffalo's skilled labor sector. They were even known to have better saving habits, cleaner/quieter homes, and were very trustworthy when it came to procuring credit extensions. They were described as 'fun-loving men' that organized autumn dances, enjoyed circuses, and drank an occasional whiskey. Accounts in Gerber's work even described the noble manner in which they fought—in an open square and with fists only. However, what this particular group

became known for was their effectiveness in protesting. In fact, this group won the majority of its strikes due to their unmatched worker solidarity that acted much like a formalized Union, circumvented infighting, avoiding an employer's tricks, and preventing strikebreakers. In fact, by 1862 Buffalo's ship carpenters always received what they struck for in an unfair manner respective and often frustrating to, other professions like the stevedores. Thus the Stevedore Riot of 1862 appears to be a link in the long chain of recurring labor feuds/issues unique to Buffalo.

This is best summed up with a small passage from Gerber's book:

The volatility of the market for outdoor, unskilled labor, combined with its lack of continuity in one job over time, constant underemployment, and frequent travel, often at considerable distance from home, to find work, made union organization all but impossible. Thus, laborers' strikes were more or less spontaneous outbursts of anger, which were largely shaped by the requirements of the moment.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Gerber, 255.

### Introduction to The Buffalo Race Riot of 1863

Preceding the infamous New York City Draft Riot, on July 6, 1863, another riot ravaged Buffalo's waterfront area in what is now known as the 'Cobblestone District'. As previously mentioned with reference to Gerber's book, this area was filled with businesses whose livelihood depended on ships connected to Lake Erie and the Erie Canal. Likewise, a local economy sprouted along the docks as the area boomed with business from the thousands of dockworkers who worked and then relaxed in surrounding bars, hotels, and brothels. Indeed, it was in this environment that the events of 1863 would be sparked by a murder in broad daylight. In a brief sense, a single murder led to retaliatory violence, that when stifled by law enforcement, manifested itself into a race riot. However, prior to the full account of what occurred during Buffalo's Race Riot of 1863, some context about both Buffalo's black community and its early police department is necessary, as these two groups take on major roles in the upcoming account—blacks as victims to racial violence and the police as determined and dedicated protectors in the moment.

Found in Gerber's book, *The Making of an American Pluralism*, we get a picture of a relatively small, but restricted, black community. For instance, in 1855 it was recorded that only 704 black citizens resided in Buffalo.<sup>163</sup> These men, women, and children were excluded from mainstream society, limited to service and menial work, confined to black-only schools, and were subject to a New York State law that demanded a mandatory fifty-dollar poll tax (participation fee) from black voters.<sup>164</sup> Nonetheless, this group of Americans made a foothold in Buffalo's waterfront as unskilled laborers, strikebreakers, and sailors. In fact, so great was their

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<sup>163</sup> Gerber, 17.

<sup>164</sup> Gerber, 18.

influence and presence by the 1860s, that labor conflicts between blacks and Irish laborers spiked. Described perfectly in a passage from Gerber's book, he tells us that

Canal boatmen fought for places in line at locks, and dockworkers regularly came to blows and fought too with sailors over whose job it was to offload certain types of cargo. Conflicts on the docks also frequently pitted the Irish in fierce battles with blacks, who at times attempted to work as sailors and longshoremen and were brought into competition with Irishmen.<sup>165</sup>

However, in a strange turn of sentiment Buffalo's residents began to feel the abolitionist spirit. Based on data collected from a survey administered to Buffalo's voters during the election of 1860, it was clear that 22.4% of Buffalonians supported the idea of black suffrage.<sup>166</sup> More profoundly, republican Germans living in the Seventh Ward not only gave 57% of their vote to Lincoln, but also gave a 42% approval rating on the idea of black suffrage. Likewise, the American-dominated Ninth Ward boasted a 34% approval rate for the same cause.<sup>167</sup> Thus two revelations come about from the description of Buffalo's black community in 1855 and statistics from the 1860 election. First, that blacks faced a racially organized society in city life and labor. Second, that by 1860 sympathetic sentiment for black equality had reached an all-time high predominately among both Buffalo's German and American communities. But regardless of this progress in segments of Buffalo's population, the upcoming account will immediately confirm that these ideas did not sit well with Buffalo's Irish. Indeed, when confronted with the murder of one of their own at the hands of a black man, the Irish are seen organizing and targeting both black residents and especially black dockworkers.

In regards to Buffalo's early police force, Gerber revealed a brief history permeated with political patronage, a sense of duty to stop crime, and a desire to provide basic welfare

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<sup>165</sup> Gerber, 135.

<sup>166</sup> Gerber, 401.

<sup>167</sup> Gerber, 402.

services.<sup>168</sup> To set the stage, a quote from the Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser* in 1841 described the lawless scene along the docks as a “large floating population of sailors and boatmen who need to be controlled.”<sup>169</sup> As a result, Buffalo’s city council sought to employ more policemen, hiring higher numbers of them with each new decade, reaching sixty officers by 1860.<sup>170</sup> What is particularly intriguing about this expansion of the force, is the manner in which these men were hired. In contrast to how modern practices operate today, Buffalo police officers between 1841 and 1860 were traditionally nominated and appointed during the first session of each newly elected council. This meant that only affluent men close to either Buffalo’s Whig or Democrat party could become police officers. However, what is striking about this system was the deliberate inclusion of officers from different ethnicities. One example of inclusion that Gerber identified referred to the council session of January 1854, during which both parties appointed policemen simultaneously for the first time. Out of the total forty appointments made by Whigs, only ten were ethnically diverse. Likewise, out of a total of twenty made by Democrats, only ten were described as ethnic.<sup>171</sup>

These policemen served for only one year, were frequently replaced, and only adhered to one professional duty—a vague mission to control crime and vice. However, Gerber mentioned that Buffalo’s early police also maintained an informal duty—to provide basic welfare services. As a result of these specific social functions, relationships between Buffalo’s German, Irish, and bourgeois communities developed in radically different ways. For instance, Buffalo’s bourgeois boasted the best relationship with the organization as it often funded, appointed officers, argued in council sessions, and laid out expectations for all of Buffalo’s police departments. In a sense,

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<sup>168</sup> Gerber, 363.

<sup>169</sup> Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, September 23, 1841.

<sup>170</sup> Gerber, 341.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

the police were created by and worked to satisfy their interests first. On the next rung down were Buffalo's Germans, who often sided with and approved of police funding and expansion, as their own values often aligned with that of the police's. In specific, Gerber illuminates three instances in 1846, 1851, and 1853 when Germans of the Fourth Ward, led by a police escort, openly protested against prostitution in Buffalo's First Ward and East Side. However, contrary to this allegiance against the vice of prostitution, Buffalo's Germans held controversial positions when it came to the future of policing. Among these were an advocacy to professionalize the police force (with training, equipment, uniforms), elimination of the patronage system, and the recruitment of more German officers. All of which stood in contention with the views of both Buffalo's Irish and bourgeois communities.<sup>172</sup>

Last in this hierarchy was the Irish. The Irish between 1841 and 1860 undeniably held the worst relationship with Buffalo's early police department. In short, they were characterized as a people with great vices and were typically seen through that lens only. Put perfectly and in great detail, Gerber writes,

The circumstances of Irish life did lead to greater interest in police welfare activities, for the Irish were frequently in need of them. Not only the stranded condition of many traveling immigrants, but the extreme deprivation of the dockside Irish made it necessary for the First Police District's officers to provide food and sleeping quarters at the neighborhood station house. Thus, in winter the station house was filled with the unemployed and their families, and in summer, with stranded immigrants.<sup>173</sup>

However, even Irishmen could become policemen should they navigate the channels of politics and earn the patronage of either party. In turn, Buffalo's Irish saw the police in a divided manner. In one sense they saw the police as a force of humanitarianism, while in another they saw the

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<sup>172</sup> Gerber, 363-364.

<sup>173</sup> Gerber, 363.

organization as an oppressive force that targeted them specifically. But regardless, the Irish enjoyed the social mobility offered by the police patronage system.<sup>174</sup>

### The Buffalo Race Riot of July 6, 1863

According to the same three newspapers, the *Courier*, *Commercial Advertiser*, and *Morning Express*, at 2 p.m. in front of Jewett and Taylor's store near Mississippi and Ohio Streets, an altercation broke out between an Irishman and an African American. In the midst of the argument, another Irishman named McLaughlin stepped in and began to address the African American in an insulting manner. The African American, known as Williams, produced an eight-inch revolver from his coat pocket and shot McLaughlin center chest, fatally wounding him. This murder took place in broad daylight, and many Irishmen witnessed it. Almost immediately every white on-looker (Germans, Irish, Americans) gave chase to exact their revenge on Williams, who was recorded to have run toward Illinois Street. The mob of whites soon cut Williams off by a group prior to Illinois Street and proceeded to beat him nearly to death.<sup>175</sup>

At this point Officers Harris, Hennessey, and O'Brien of the Buffalo Police were drawn to the scene and intervened to pull Williams out of the crowd, ensuring his safety while placing him under arrest for the murder of McLaughlin. As the officers attempted to transport him to the station, a mob of an estimated two hundred whites composed of mainly Irishmen chased them, calling for the lynching of Williams. However, they were unable to keep up with the horse and carriage, allowing the officers to intern Williams successfully into a jail cell inside their station. At this point the mob caught up and began yelling outside of the station doors, vowing to tear down the station walls and lynch Williams themselves should they be ignored any further.

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> "A Disgraceful Riot- Two Negros Killed and Several Injured- Considerable of a Panic." Buffalo *Courier*, July 7, 1863: 3.



However, it is only in the *Commercial Advertiser* that Police Justice Albro addressed the crowd from his office windows several stories up. He urged the mob that any further actions or threats of violence, would place them all in violation of the law, referring to the crime of disturbing the peace and unlawful assembly. In turn, the mob began to disperse.<sup>176</sup>

In this moment of peace, the officers took the opportunity to move Williams to a nearby district's jailhouse. This was a fatal mistake as the mob had not fully disbanded yet, and upon the sight of Williams, charged the officers with clubs and stones. The police, with their newly allowed firearms and batons, fought them back swiftly, causing the mob to redirect their anger to other areas of the city. One of the first places they redirected to was the docks. The docks were an ideal target for the Irish rioters, as they knew from both personal and professional experiences that many of the dockworkers there were African American.<sup>177</sup>

When the mob arrived at the docks they began to attack crews of black men unloading goods from various cargo ships. The first ship boarded by the mob was the Propeller Oswego. Once onboard the mob attacked a black man who was saved only through the intervention of the police, who were able to cut their way through the mob to save him. Simultaneously, a neighboring boat, the Propeller Portsmouth set sail in an effort to escape the violence, and they did. Additionally, another predominantly black crew aboard the Propeller Mendota, was able to stand their ground against the mob when their Captain armed his crew with rifles. At this point, it was recorded by the *Commercial Advertiser* that nearly all of the African Americans in that part of the city had begun to flee the area.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> "A Disgraceful and Terrible Riot." Buffalo: Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, July 7, 1863: 3.

<sup>177</sup> Buffalo *Commerical Advertiser*, July 7, 1863: 3.

<sup>178</sup> Buffalo *Commerical Advertiser*, July 7, 1863: 3.

As the mob patrolled up and down the docks in search of black people to attack, a man was recorded by the *Morning Express* to have shouted, "Lets clean out the n\*\*\*\*\* dives on Commercial Street!"<sup>179</sup> At this moment, the mob was excited by the sight of an African American running for his life in the opposite direction. It was recorded that the man ran into the outhouses in front of the United States Hotel, known as 'Dug's Dive'. As policemen flooded the area in an attempt to stop the violence, they successfully rescued the man from the hotel outhouses and imminent death. Within a few moments after, more Buffalo Police appeared to form a perimeter around the hotel in order to evacuate the terrified black tenants inside of Dug's Dive.<sup>180</sup>

As the mob continued a losing fight with the police outside of Dug's Dive, they redirected their attention again to the New England Hotel on Lloyd Street, which was also known to house many black residents. In turn, the police were immediately dispatched again to fight the mob back, while that hotel's black residents could be evacuated to the safety of the local police station. Lastly, the Emerald Hotel came under attack by these rioters who seemed intent on targeting and beating its black residents. However their fury lost momentum when they realized the Emerald's black residents had already been evacuated prior to their arrival.<sup>181</sup>

At this point it was recorded in the Buffalo *Commercial* that two men, Beckwith and an Irish lawyer by the name of John W. Murphy, addressed the mob in an effort to quell tensions. Both men pleaded with the mob to cease attacking the hotels and blacks. The mob seemingly listened and began to disperse.<sup>182</sup> Nonetheless, still hungry for revenge and blood, some in the mob shifted their focus onto the docks once more. During this last offensive on black

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<sup>179</sup> "Terrible Riot of Dock Laborers." Buffalo *Morning Express*, July 7, 1863: 3.

<sup>180</sup> Buffalo *Morning Express*, July 7, 1863: 3.

<sup>181</sup> Buffalo *Morning Express*, July 7, 1863: 3.

<sup>182</sup> Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, July 7, 1863: 3.

dockworkers, the mob boarded the Propeller Mary Stewart, looking for its black crew members. They could not find anyone until they looked over the side of the ship to find a black man named Williams (separate Williams from beginning) holding onto a rope, hiding. As he pleaded for his life, the mob struck his hands and head several times, causing him to lose his grip and fall into the water, where he drowned.<sup>183</sup>

It should be noted that in this specific instance, an effort was made to save this man's life by a Buffalo Police Detective named Kent. Detective Kent initially attempted to stop the assault on the Stewart's Williams, but in the process was thrown overboard too. Nonetheless, Kent would survive by swimming to shore, but not before another ship, the Propeller Tonawanda, was attacked and boarded. While onboard the Tonawanda, the mob threw another black man overboard, causing him to drown as well in the same fashion as the man Kent had failed to save. After this bloodletting at the docks, the mob was said to have dispersed for good. The overall conclusion of the riot was that two African Americans had died while some thirty others were relocated to the police station for their safety. In the aftermath, it was mentioned in the *Buffalo Courier* that the ring leader dubbed "Happy Jack,"<sup>184</sup> along with many others were arrested. Lastly later that night, Buffalo Mayor William Fargo (founder of Wells Fargo banking) swore in a large amount of what was termed as "Specials" to strengthen both Buffalo's Police and the Fire Department.<sup>185</sup>

In turn, discernable from this event, the motivational grievances behind the violence were directly race related. In fact, the riot of July 1863 has more in common with those racially charged riots seen in Detroit and New York City than any other instance. For just as rioters in

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<sup>183</sup> Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, July 7, 1863: 3.

<sup>184</sup> Buffalo *Courier*, July 7, 1863: 3.

<sup>185</sup> Buffalo *Courier*, July 7, 1863: 3.

Detroit perceived a black man to be at the center of a repulsive trial, and just as rioters in New York blamed blacks for the hardships imposed by the Civil War and competitive job markets, Buffalo's residents also had a gripe against African Americans. For, this entire episode erupted from the murder of a white man at the hands of a black man. Typically, if one were guilty or suspected of murder, they would undergo a rigorous prosecution for homicide in a court of law. However, when black men of this time period committed a crime, they were not afforded this process. Instead, blacks had their punishments maximized and expedited in the moment. This was made abundantly clear in this instance, as the blatant murder of McLaughlin, and the equality with which Buffalo Police enforced the law, was punished with retaliatory mob violence and murder against Buffalo's black community.

However, in comparison to riots like that of Detroit or New York City, Buffalo's riots were still exceptionally less destructive and less deadly. For instance, in New York City, over a dozen blacks were killed and displayed in the most gruesome of ways, dozens of buildings had been attacked and burned, and many soldiers, policemen, and rioters were killed in the restoration of order. In Detroit, thirty-five buildings sympathetic to or directly supporting blacks were razed to the ground, two men were killed (one black one white), hundreds had been beaten or injured, and almost an equal number were made homeless. However, in Buffalo we see that although the intent of the mob was to attack black residents and dockworkers, they did so in a different manner. For instance, racial violence predominately took place at Dug's Dive, The New England Hotel, The Emerald Hotel, and the docks, rather than across the entire city. And although two black men had been killed in their attacks, the mob did not succeed in burning or destroying infrastructure significant to Buffalo's black community. We can lend further explanation as to the ineffectiveness of the racist mob in Buffalo, when we look at the

effectiveness of the Buffalo Police Department. Indeed, armed with their newly acquired revolvers and batons, policemen were able to secure and evacuate people living in each hotel. In fact, it was only when racial violence took place in tight quarters aboard the decks of ships docked in Buffalo's Harbor, that the police proved ineffective in protecting or rescuing people in distress.

Lastly, we come to the outcomes and noticeable changes to Buffalo itself in the aftermath. As mentioned in the accounts, Mayor William Fargo swore in a large number of 'specials' into the Buffalo Police. This move to enlarge the force in 1863, undoubtedly played a significant role in the progression of Buffalo's Police force, taking them from a mediocre/unarmed force of as little as eight men in 1862, to a professional/career group of police officers armed with pistols, batons, and handcuffs. Finally, all three papers mention that Mayor Fargo proceeded to double the size of Buffalo's Fire department, undoubtedly cementing a legacy of increased professionalism and ability to combat fires in decades to come.

## Conclusion of Part Two

With the retelling of these events we can easily see the role of unfair worker's wages and racial prejudices, as they facilitated/motivated the riotous energy seen in eruptions of civil unrest specifically in Buffalo. Moreover, we can now see that each incident is unique because of the individual circumstances, but the themes are in the approximate same ballpark, and those themes are the subject of this thesis —social division, racism, and workers' rights— all or some of which come into play through varied circumstances. They vary because people and individuals are just that —unique, but they are rooted in the myths of differences that poison people's minds, such as ethnic, religious, and racial differences that keep people from organizing when it is in their best interest, as in unions or other organizations, to fight together for better economic rights. And, indeed part two illuminates that major white social groups were beginning to see by the early 1860s, that they are not that different after all. Such as the Irish and German unskilled workers who united in Buffalo 1862 to protest in favor of higher wages. But more profoundly the events of 1863 reflect a more wicked form of worker solidarity. Solidarity that stood ready in 1863 to combat the rising equality of blacks and the inclusion of black workers along Buffalo's docks.

Indeed, just as Buffalo's German and Irish communities formed a coalition against the historic and perpetual social and economic stratification levied by bosses in both factories and along the docks (1862), so too would their united desire to enforce racial boundaries shine through during Buffalo's riot of 1863. Perfectly put by Buffalo historian David Gerber in his *The Making of an American Pluralism*, Irish and German immigrants took on a unique identity once they settled in their respective locations. An identity that sought to preserve homeland traditions,

and also improve surroundings while living in American cities.<sup>186</sup> Undoubtedly, this attempt to ‘preserve and improve’ came in many forms, but most strikingly in the form of racially motivated civil unrest. Indeed, as Irish and German communities came under pressure from social divisions, new laws, and the Civil War, their participation in civil unrest became greater and greater, proving that riots, strikes, and demonstrations were a popular tactic in their new lives as Americans. Thus this study has proven that two particular social questions, two nativist riots, and one piece of legislation clearly influenced unrest seen during the Civil War, for the overarching forces that brought these men (across 1861 and 1865) face to face with each other cannot be ignored. Likewise, these same influencers can be seen shaping the city of Buffalo and the beliefs of its residents. However, what is clearly presented across this study are the embers that sparked the flames of unrest across the North and in Buffalo, New York. Embers that point to specific moments in which physical altercations facilitated the deterioration of order and decency in the surrounding populace.

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<sup>186</sup> Gerber, 32.

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