

THE FOUNDING OF CORKTOWN, HAMILTON, 1832-1847

CORKTOWN, 1832 - 1847:
THE FOUNDING OF HAMILTON'S
PRE FAMINE CATHOLIC IRISH SETTLEMENT

By

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Abstract

The historiography of Irish migration to British North America in the nineteenth-century has centred predominantly on those migrants who were exiled from Ireland after the Great Famine, 1845-1850. However, a significant number of Irishmen, both Protestant and Catholic, arrived in the Canadas emigrants by choice in the years leading up to the Great Hunger. Their emigrations were often part of family economic strategies and, as such, they arrived in North America with a greater capability for early success. Irish-Canadian historiography, moreover, has focussed primarily on rural settlement, by far the most common choice of Irish migrants in the Canadas. Yet, a significant number of Irishmen did settle in the growing urban centres of nineteenth-century Canada. Research on these migrants has remained undone in the writing of the social history of Canadian immigration. They were anomalous, both as pre-Famine newcomers and as urban dwellers, and in effect, this has been reflected in the broader historiography.

This thesis is a study of the Catholic Irish in one specific urban locale, "Corktown", in Hamilton, Upper Canada, from 1832 to 1847. Irish migrants settled here in this early period establishing an economic and cultural foothold for their countrymen who arrived later in dire circumstances. They founded a neighbourhood out of a series of cluster settlement areas in the southeastern part of the town. Upon

this, they built a community whose cultural cohesion was manifest in their Catholic Church, St. Mary's, and in Corktown's taverns, market and merchant shops, and associational life. Because of their uniqueness, and not in spite of it, the urban Catholic Irish in Corktown provide an interesting topic, and a new direction in the historiography of the Irish-Canadians.

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Chapter 1 : Introduction - The Urban Catholic Irish and Irish-
Canadian Historiography

"More than one motive influenced me," John Francis Maguire began his monograph on the Irish in North America in 1867, "in the desire to visit America, and record... my impressions..."

I was desirous of understanding practically [the nature of Irish communities in the New World]... seeing how the first difficulties were overcome, and how progress was gradually effected... I had another distinct purpose in view - to combat... a sad error into which, from many causes and motives, the Irish are unhappily betrayed; that of not selecting the right place for their special industry - of the peasant lingering in the city until he becomes merged in its population... [Also,] I desired to learn if... Irish Catholics lost their faith, or became indifferent to religion, the moment they landed in America; or whether... they were at once the pioneers and pillars of their faith...¹

One hundred and twenty years later, historians are asking the same questions of the Irish emigrant past in North America. Rural versus urban settlement, the economic and social niches in which immigrants achieved community footholds in early North American society, and the cultural expression of Irish Catholicism in the New World remain principal concerns in the social history of Irish migration to North America. Maguire's New World tour was conceived, he admitted, to report to the Irish people on the success that Irish newcomers enjoyed in creating new communities and contributing to societal advances. To an appreciable extent, he was justified in so doing. By the late

nineteenth century, Irishmen had achieved positions of repute in economic and social circles. In the late 1860s, Maguire could write with pride of the "lace-curtain" Irish who had become firmly established in North America's emerging middle-class.

Historically, the questions that Maguire sought answers to in the 1860s still remain. Some important groundwork on the Irish preference for rural or urban settlement in North America has been done, but more remains to be said from research performed on specific communities of both types. Similarly, further study on the formation and growth of Irish communities needs to be forthcoming to identify the social and economic layers that arose in different New World contexts. Unlike Maguire, historians can no longer view Irish communities in isolation from larger society. They were integral elements within growing rural and urban societies throughout North America. Finally, Irish Catholicism remains of particular importance to understanding the salience of ethnic identity and its ability to shape the persistence of culture in Irish emigrants. How society, ethnicity, class and culture converged in a single setting, rural or urban, then, remains a definitive historical pursuit well over a century after Maguire published his descriptive account.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the growth of Hamilton's pre-Famine emigrant Irish community with particular reference to the emergence, between 1832 and 1847, of "Corktown", the neighbourhood which gave Irish Roman Catholicism a spatial identity and which, in turn, Irish Catholics identified with as the expression of their cultural and social cohesion. Corktown was a series of small

Irish Catholic cluster settlements in Hamilton's Fourth Ward, the southeastern area of the town. It was home to Irish-owned saloons and merchant houses, Irish politicians and artisans, and, in the early years, the town market. While a majority of Irish Catholics never at one time lived within its physical boundaries, Corktown was spatially symbolic to early Hamilton's Irish emigrants, both permanent and transient. The Irish Catholic cultural identity in early Hamilton was buttressed with a spatial identity. Here, the Catholic Irish established themselves in the bottom rungs of the social structural hierarchy, but it is significant that that there was room for them to do so at all. From this base they built a social network based on kinship, religion and community which was manifested in the Catholic churches, Irish saloons, Catholic volunteer societies and in the physical locations of Irish neighbourhood settlement. By 1847, these pre-Famine Irish Catholics had made significant inroads politically, culturally and, to some extent, economically in this Canadian community, and the marked increase in their numbers after 1847 was perceived by some Canadians as a worrisome development. The Famine migrants were not the same type of newcomers that immigration in the earlier era had brought from Ireland. Destitute and diseased, "... leaning together in the cities, sick and exhausted, unlikely to become self-supporting...", they presented a threat not only to the hegemony of colonial officials and entrepreneurs who had grown rich from mercantile activities in an undeveloped economic environment, but to the tenuous and fragile cultural accomodation that places like Corktown represented.² In Boston, Oscar Handlin wrote, "[n]ativist fears failed to develop more

significantly because the Irish before 1845 presented no danger to the stability of the old society."³ Essentially, the same scenario had unfolded in Hamilton where, for example, only one large-scale Orange-Catholic disturbance took place in the pre-Famine period.

Irish immigration to Canada in the nineteenth-century can essentially be divided into two rather neat phases, each distinctive in character. The "Great Hunger" (1845-49) and the subsequent Irish diaspora was the result of one of a series of crippling crop failures that plagued Ireland in the early nineteenth-century. Famines had wrought heavy losses in earlier years, to be sure, but the magnitude of the famine in the late 1840s surpassed the social and economic upheaval of the others. It peaked in the year 1847, a point that serves as a hiatus in Irish emigration history and in the history of Corktown, Hamilton. Thereafter, large numbers of Irish migrants collected in Canadian towns and cities in family units, without money and often diseased. They came to British North America as Ireland's economic exiles, unlike their pre-Famine countrymen who, for the most part, consciously and individually planned emigration because of inheritance practices which had subdivided land too thinly to provide subsistence for a new generation. They were the disenchanting sons and daughters of Ireland's tenant class. Their migration to Upper Canada and Hamilton in this era, often part of a family emigration strategy, sought to reestablish the same sort of kin-based economic organisation that had existed in Ireland before the land crisis.⁴

The practice of family chain migration was evident in most European transatlantic movements in the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries. As an element of family economic strategies, it cannot consequently be characterised in any simple "push/pull" model.⁵ The decision to emigrate at a particular time was influenced by economic and social conditions at home, but the major determinant of destination was the New World location of family members who had gone before. The first immigrant settlers to arrive could provide a foothold for their relatives who came after, both culturally as a place of familiarity in North America, and economically, by establishing occupational links for newcomers. "[P]articular niches in the employment structure" existed by the mid-nineteenth century, John MacDonald and Leatrice MacDonald note, "to which successive immigrants directed their fellows on the basis of their own experience".⁶ Once started, family reunification through chain migration was self-generating and often carried on until complete immigrant families were settled in North America. By that time, however, another chain migration process had often begun where family members replicated internally the process that had landed them in North America, many moving west to regions that promised cheap and accessible land. As a family strategy, chain migration gave order and security to a potentially ruinous individual endeavour.

Irish migrations to the Canadas shared this characteristic, both before and after the Famine. Bruce Elliott has noted of Tipperary Protestant migrants that "[t]he influence of relatives in determining the origins, volume, direction and destination of emigration was already apparent in 1818..."⁷ This practice continued throughout the century as is evidenced by the Irish propensity for saving funds to remit to family members for their transatlantic voyages.⁸ For many of these sojourners,

the time between emigration and family reunification was a period of confusion in a new social and economic setting. Establishing contacts with relatives who had gone before in the family's chain of migration was one of the principal tasks at hand for Irish emigrants immediately upon arrival. Newspapers of the 1830s and 40s are rife with advertisements like the one Richard Sloan sponsored in the Western Mercury on February 9, 1832, seeking information on "his Sister Mary Sloan, who emigrated from the County of Down about 5 years" earlier.⁹ Emigration for many pre-Famine Irishmen, in short, was a process of temporary dislocation followed by relocation in a North American locale with the assistance of previous emigrants among the Irish community in that locale. It is this process that characterises the foundation and growth of Corktown, in Hamilton, Upper Canada, from 1832 to 1847. In turn, Corktown and other pre-Famine Irish settlements in the Canadas served as footholds, physically, economically, and perhaps most important, culturally, for the Famine-stricken Irish who came there after 1847.

The historiography of the Irish in North America has undergone significant revision in recent years. The predominant assumption among American historians that the Irish in North America were principally wage-labouring, city-dwellers has, in essence, been proven to be mistaken in the Canadian case. Historians of Irish immigration to the United States continue to view nineteenth-century Irish migration as a process of peopling urban America. The Irish in the United States were, Lawrence McCaffrey notes in a recent essay, "the Classic Ethnics, pioneer[ing] the American urban ghetto,... the paradigm of the American

ethnic experience."¹⁰ They were, moreover, predominantly Roman Catholic, a fact that has become enshrined in traditional American historical literature and remains an important element in relating the ethnic past. The logic behind the historiographical interpretation of Irish-American predispositions for urban dwelling rests upon four fundamental tenets. The first of these emerges from Oscar Handlin's research on the Irish in Boston, Boston's Immigrants.¹¹ The Irish arrived penniless, he argued, and often in poor health. Their need to acquire wage work in the immediate area of their port of arrival to feed their families established them in both a socio-economic and a geographic setting. The barely subsistence wages that working men could earn in the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s essentially inhibited internal migration beyond that place for many Irishmen who might have sought the reestablishment of an agricultural way of life. Their immobility, then, became their principal characteristic. Another traditional assumption addresses the specific talents with which immigrant Irishmen were equipped. In an earlier work, McCaffrey held that even after cash had been acquired, Irish migrants did not farm in America because they were technologically too backward to do so. "Lack of skills", he wrote,

was far more important than a shortage of funds indetermining the Irish-Americans' decision to become city dwellers... Irish peasants were among the most inefficient farmers in Europe and were not equipped for life in rural America... Irish peasants still used only simple tools - the spade, the scythe, and the hoe.¹²

Their inability to farm outside of a culturally-based, communal system, it is held, forced Irishmen into wage work and urban living in America. A third assumption hinges upon the second one. William V. Shannon has suggested that even had Irishmen possessed the ways and means to farm in America, they rejected it psychologically, because they were scarred with the experience which uprooted them from their Old World homes. "The Irish rejected the land for the land rejected them."¹³ This third assumption leads into a final one which holds that the Irish were unable to adapt to rural life in America. Their affinity with community was undermined by the solitude of American farming. The destruction of traditional, community-oriented Irish cluster settlement introduced a new, more organised pattern of grazier farming, alienating many to the point of emigration. In America, a similar pattern existed. The quest for a new life amid an Irish community, some hold, shaped the decisions of Irishmen to remain urban dwellers.¹⁴ In effect, these four assumptions compose the historiographical reasoning behind the Irish as an urban American phenomenon.¹⁵

In Canadian historiography, a fifth element has emerged in this regard. Explanations of Irish attraction to the urban areas in Canada have been based traditionally in the discussion of land accessibility and labour markets. This position has been advanced most strongly by Gary Teeple and H.C. Pentland.¹⁶ In his 1972 article, "Land, Labour, and Capital in Pre-Confederation Canada," Teeple assumes that the logical desire of an Irish, rural, pre-industrial peasant who found himself in Canada would have been to resume the ancestral mode of subsistence in Ireland: farming. However, in the Canadas during this

period almost all of the arable land was taken up by absentee mercantile elites, military grantees and clergy reserves. Land prices kept artificially high by colonial officials interested in developing pools of labour in the towns and cities of the Canadas, this theory holds, effectively restricted poor Irish immigrants' access to free or cheap land.

More recently, these assumptions have come under considerable criticism in the Canadian sphere. Statistical findings by Professors Gordon Darroch and Michael Ornstein, and research by Donald Akenson suggest that the Irish in nineteenth-century Canada were a predominantly rural people.¹⁷ Including those who inhabited Canada's incorporated towns and villages, Akenson writes, "[i]n 1851, 78.9 percent of the Irish-born lived in rural areas, and in 1861 the percentage was 74.4..." Moreover, despite a greater propensity for Irish Protestants to farm in Canada in this era (82.2 percent lived in rural areas in 1871), a significant proportion of Irish Catholics chose agriculture as a way of life in the colonies as well. By 1871, rural Catholics of Irish descent composed 66.3 per cent of all Irish Catholics living in the Canadas.¹⁸ The pattern here, then, is clear. The "American system" of an urban-based Irish population in the nineteenth-century did not exist in the Canadian case. Why this curious disjuncture between the historiography of the Irish in the United States and of these emigrants in Canada ?

The early historiography of the Irish in Canada provides few clues to this particular problem. Articles written on the effects of Irish Famine immigration in the Canadas by Kenneth Duncan and G.J. Parr essentially focus upon the conditions and attitudes in the host society

and, as such, give little insight into Irish social and cultural variables which may have shaped their decisions on where to live.¹⁹ More recent work on the birth and development of the Orange Order in Canada by Cecil Houston and William Smyth, as well as that by Gregory Kealey, focuses on the cultural meaning that this institution gave to Irish Protestants (and assigned to Irish Catholics). Though solid analyses of Irish Canadian culture, these works do not seek to address the rural/urban settlement question.²⁰ A more refined answer probably lies in detailed, microscopic analyses of particular Irish immigrant communities. To some extent, this process is already in motion. John J. Mannion's 1974 study Irish Settlements in Eastern Canada is seminal in its treatment of cultural transfer and adaptation through the process of migration and settlement. Mannion centres upon three rural regions where Irish communities arose: Douro, Ennismore and north Emily townships in Ontario; the Miramichi region in New Brunswick; and several fishing villages near St. John's on the Avalon Peninsula in Newfoundland. Akenson's case study of Irish migration and settlement in nineteenth-century Leeds and Lansdowne Township in his book, The Irish in Ontario (1984) is also an important study in this respect. Another study of note concerning rural, central Canadian Irish settlement, Elliott's Irish Migrants in the Canadas (1988), advances this approach much further. In this work, Elliott traces the migrations of some 775 Tipperary Protestant families to their points of settlement in the Canadas in the 1800s, using traditional and genealogical methods. Like Akenson's and Mannion's subjects, Elliott's Irish settlers confirm the larger assumption that Irish migration to Upper Canada was predominantly

rural in its focus.²¹ Murray Nicolson's research on the urban Catholic Irish in mid-Victorian Toronto takes a different historiographical tack. The articles that have come from his 1982 Ph.D. thesis document the central importance of the Catholic Church to the Famine emigrants who settled in that city after 1850.²² The approach of Nicholson's work implies the need for Irish Canadian historiography to set aside for a time its emphasis on the majority experience. If, as J.C.D. Clark has written, historical writing moves "from the particular to the general, and then back to the particular", early Canadian *urban* Irish communities are of particular importance to the researcher in order to understand the apparently anomalous preference of some Irish immigrants for settlement not merely in towns and cities, but within that context in culturally segregated neighbourhoods.²³ Who were the urban Irish and why did they buck the trend of their countrymen in the Canadas in the nineteenth-century ?

The experience of pre-Famine urban Catholic Irishmen is significant to Irish-Canadian historiography because of their uniqueness and not in spite of it. In this respect, research on the Catholic Irish in Hamilton is of particular relevance. A description of the development of Hamilton and environs after 1800 may provide some insight into what it was that the first Irish Catholic sojourners saw in settling there.²⁴ The region's early settlers such as Richard Beasley, James Durand and Richard Hatt established farmsteads at the Head of the Lake in the early years after the turn of the century. The shelter that the Niagara Escarpment afforded the area's first settlers, the access to Lake Ontario through Burlington Bay, and the numerous running streams

proved attractive to ambitious men who saw profit to be made from exploiting the region's resources. Yet, for the most part, the first fifteen years of the century witnessed little development on the site where Hamilton would later rise. Millers and merchants at this time concentrated in Dundas and Ancaster, two nearby villages whose settlers had been resident in those communities for a longer period. Even by 1820, John Weaver has estimated, no more than 3,000 people inhabited the shores of Burlington Bay.²⁵

By this time, however, the social and economic processes that would shape the nature of the early town's society had already been set in motion. Many of these had become evident during and after the War of 1812, which saw the Head of the Lake as a significant point in the battle theatre. Clashes at Stoney Creek and Burlington Heights brought the conflict right to the doors of the area's first settlers: Richard Beasley's homestead, in fact, was made the headquarters for British Brigadier-General John Vincent's Niagara campaign in 1813.²⁶ Besides the war's physical visibility, its events brought to the fore the political loyalties of the area's inhabitants. The loyalist, Tory impulse struck a chord with a few of the region's settlers, who may have perceived economic and social reward in this tack. It forced American settlers to decide whether to return to the United States, remain to face suspicion of their loyalties, or to fight, perhaps behind the lines, for the American cause. In addition, it spurred the emergence of a political hybrid, the loyal reformers, who were manifest in early Hamilton in the Durand, Willson and Rolph families. As such, the war

set the stage for political development in Hamilton and Upper Canada for the next twenty-five years.²⁷

The years immediately after the war were instrumental with regard to the town's physical and economic development. In 1815, Queenston merchant George Hamilton purchased from James Durand a tract of land at the Head of the Lake which included Lot 14, Concession 3, Barton Township. With the encouragement of his neighbour to the north, Nathaniel Hughson, Hamilton granted to the Crown land on this site for the construction of a courthouse and jail to serve the newly carved Gore District, "...to the benefit of values on both men's property".²⁸ To this, Hamilton later offered a town market site, providing most of the principal infrastructure needed for the early development of the town that would take his name. The period 1816-1830 was one of economic congealment in frontier Hamilton. Bloc land sales in this period, both within the townsite and on outlying properties, and speculation in canal stock (when the Burlington Bay [1826] and Desjardins [1827] canals commenced construction) and provisions flourished among the town's merchant-landowners and traders. In the late 1820s, economic development in Hamilton was driven principally by mercantile activity which, with the onset of canal construction, had introduced to the town a new labour-intensive economic sector and consequently, the Irish, who filled these employment positions. In 1832, Hamilton was a town on the brink of incorporation. Despite its youth and comparatively small population, it had an established socio-economic order which would shape the town's growth over the ensuing quarter-century. All preferred speculative land had been taken up by about 1830, and in this early

society, land was the most ready form of capital. The men of means were those who arrived first in Hamilton and who acquired choice tracts of land. Young in years, Hamilton by the late 1830s supported a social structure that in many ways was not as "open" as other frontier towns have been perceived to be historically. Nevertheless, around 1832, a trickle of Irish Catholic emigrants began to carve out a niche in the town's social landscape.

The Toronto-based Irish newspaper The Mirror reported that on July 12, 1838 there were in Hamilton

... about two hundred men who have been doing duty here as a military guard, and that they are principally Irish. At morning drill on the Twelfth they marched off to the tune of the "Boyne Water", which... excited the indignation of the Roman Catholics, who considered it as an insult to their national feelings... About 10 o'clock, a number of persons were to be seen about the streets some of them six months men lately discharged on the lines, displaying the Orange badge of affiliation. The Roman Catholics, understanding that a procession was really about to take place, began to collect in the [Court House] Square, with a determination to prevent it and as a signal of defiance mounted the Green ribbon... The Canadians and others uninitiated in the mystery of Irish feuds, gathered to see what they called "an Irish row", and they were not kept long in suspense. The belligerents being in the vicinity of a new building, had a mountain of bricks for their arsenal, which were made to fly in every direction, shilleleghs and fists being used for close quarters. During the whole afternoon the neighborhood of the Square was a scene of disgraceful riot. Severe wounds were inflicted, but no lives were lost. There was no procession. The Orange party evidently

miscalculated the strength of the Catholics, who certainly outnumber them.²⁹

One of the elements of Irish cultural baggage that accompanied Erin's sons and daughters in their nineteenth-century migrations across the Atlantic was their propensity for factional fighting based, for the most part, on religious differences. Nineteenth-century Canadian cities and towns were the recipients of a rising tide of Orange-Green violence, most occurring in the 1860s, 70s and 80s.³⁰ NOT SO, REALLY OVERSTATED! The fact that the Orange-Catholic riot of July 12, 1838, was the only incident of this sort to occur in Hamilton before 1850 therefore makes this event particularly significant as an apparent anomaly in an otherwise racially harmonious urban social landscape. It is also, then, an appropriate starting point for a discussion of the factors that contributed to the historical experience of the Roman Catholic Irish population of early nineteenth-century Hamilton, Upper Canada, in particular the establishment of their ethnic neighbourhood known as Corktown between 1832 and 1847.

The first significant element of the Orange-Green riot in Hamilton on July 12, 1838, is, quite simply, its urban context. Catholic Irishmen had, by 1838, established a sufficiently firm presence and sense of cohesiveness in the growing town of Hamilton which clearly prompted them to protect their identity and to defend their separateness against the encroachment of an antagonistic, Old World perception of their culture. That they effectively defeated a militia unit composed mostly of out-of-towners, moreover, attests to the existence of a sense of permanence among the residents of Corktown, as early as the late 1830s, a signal that the Irish of Hamilton were no longer simply

sojourners, but had already become part of the emerging city's cultural and social fabric.

Within this context, Hamilton's riotous "Glorious Twelfth" is also significant from a social structural perspective. As Kealey and others have demonstrated, the violence of Orange riots in Canada throughout the nineteenth-century testify to this virulence of feeling, not only to the perpetuation of a religious schism, but to important socioeconomic differences between Protestant and Roman Catholic Irish migrants.³¹ As in Ireland, Protestant and Catholic became synonymous with "have" and "have not" among the Irish population. Irish Catholic farmers, as Elliott notes, often occupied marginal agricultural lands, a function of their generally poorer circumstances upon arrival than Irish Protestants.³² In the cities and towns, as we shall see, Irish Catholic immigrants tended to form pools of unskilled labour working for meagre wages, in marked contrast to the skilled tradesmen and professionals among Irish Protestants in this era. Class and religious difference combined to fuel resentment between these two groups of emigrants. The riot of July 12, 1838 in Hamilton, Upper Canada, is evidence of the swift emergence of these differences within Canada's urban Irish population.

It is significant, moreover, that "[t]he Canadians and others uninitiated in the mystery of Irish feuds" were uninvolved in the actual conflict. Their nativism, like that of Boston's older society, would not be activated to any degree of intensity for another decade, when the spectre of diseased and impoverished Famine migrants would overwhelm the initial welcome extended by Hamilton society to the dispossessed

migrants.³³ In the pre-Famine era, Catholic Irish settlers to the town felt little of the ostracism that their countrymen would feel after 1847. In the early period, Hamilton needed Irish Catholics as much as they needed Hamilton. Finally, when the Orange-sympathising militia marched eastward to the centre of town in 1838, Irish Roman Catholics "began to collect in the [Court House] Square," the point controlling access to the physical space of Corktown. The place where Irish Catholics gathered to combat a perceived threat is therefore of some note. The spatial identification of the Catholic Irish in Hamilton with Corktown is evident in this occurrence.

The Orange-Catholic riot of 1838 points to several components of the Irish experience in Hamilton in the pre-Famine period. Its anomalousness signifies the acceptance of Irish Catholicism in the early town. The Catholic Irish here were urban-dwelling, largely working-class newcomers who identified with a particular area of the town. Their significance, it seems, rests not only in the contributions they made to the growth of Hamilton, but in their wider relevance to Canadian historiography.

The chapters in this thesis have been organised in a manner that seeks to reveal the different layers of Hamilton's Irish "community within a community", Corktown, from 1832 to 1847. It is necessary to understand first the structural elements of any community. The numerical and physical presence of the Catholic Irish in Hamilton and Corktown in this period are addressed in Chapter Two. Chapter Three moves this research away from structures and towards behaviour, by discussing the economic bases of survival among Corktown's Catholic

Irish, from 1832 to 1847. A fourth chapter addresses an equally important element, the cognitive dimensions that shaped the ethnicity of Hamilton's Irish in this period. These layers formed the foundation of the community which, by 1847, had become well-entrenched in the physical and social fabric of the town. Culturally, Hamilton's Irish settlement drew Famine emigrants to the newly incorporated city, so much so that Famine migrants overburdened the resources of Hamilton and Corktown. Popular attitudes toward the Catholic Irish took a decided turn for the worse in the years after 1847.

Endnotes

Abbreviations

ARCAT. -- Archives of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto.

HPLSC. -- Hamilton Public Library: Special Collections.

MLSC. -- Mills Library: Special Collections (McMaster University).

PAO. -- Public Archives of Ontario

UDCMU. -- Urban Documentation Centre, McMaster University.

¹ John Francis Maguire, M.P. The Irish in America (London, 1868), pp. vii-viii. Reprinted by Arno Press and The New York Times (New York, 1969)

² G.J. Parr, "The Welcome and the Wake, Attitudes in Canada Toward the Irish Famine Migration," Ontario History 65 (June, 1974), p.108.

³ Oscar Handlin, Boston's Immigrants, 1790-1865: A Study in Acculturation (Cambridge, Mass., 1941), p.197.

⁴ For research on Irish migration as part of a "family strategy", see Robert E. Kennedy, Jr., The Irish: Emigration, Marriage and Fertility (Berkeley, 1973).

⁵ Traditional immigration historiography has employed this model to some extent. See, for example, Frank Thistlethwaite, "Migration From Europe Overseas in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in Herbert Moller (ed.) Population Movements in Modern European History (New York, 1964), pp.73-92, Oscar Handlin, The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People (Boston, 1951) and J. Baxevanis, Economy and Population Movements in the Peloponnesos of Greece (Athens, 1972), especially pp.60-75.

⁶ John S. MacDonald and Leatrice D. MacDonald, "Chain Migration, Ethnic Neighborhood Formation, and Social Networks," in Charles Tilly (ed.) An Urban World (Toronto, 1974), p.232.

⁷ Bruce S. Elliott, Irish Migrants in the Canadas: A New Approach (Kingston, 1988), pp.114-15.

⁸ This theme is documented in Kerby A. Miller, Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America (New York, 1985).

- ⁹ Western Mercury 8 February 1832, HPLSC.
- ¹⁰ Lawrence J. McCaffrey, Ellen Skerrett, Michael F. Funchion and Charles Fanning, The Irish in Chicago (Urbana, 1988), p.1.
- ¹¹ Handlin, Boston's Immigrants.
- ¹² Lawrence J. McCaffrey, The Irish Diaspora in America (Bloomington, 1976), p.63.
- ¹³ William V. Shannon, The American Irish (New York, 1963), p.27.
- ¹⁴ See Ibid., and McCaffrey, Diaspora.
- ¹⁵ This historiographical configuration is neatly summarised in Donald H. Akenson, "An Agnostic View of the Historiography of the Irish-Americans," Labour/ Le Travail 14 (Fall, 1984), pp.123-59. See particularly pp.123-26.
- ¹⁶ See Gary Teeple, "Land, Labour, and Capital in Pre-Confederation Canada," in Teeple (ed.) Capitalism and the National Question in Canada (Toronto, 1972), pp.43-66 and H.C. Pentland, "The Development of a Capitalistic Labour Market in Canada," Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science 25 (November, 1959), pp.450-61.
- ¹⁷ See A. Gordon Darroch and Michael D. Ornstein, "Ethnicity and Occupational Structure in Canada in 1871: The Vertical Mosaic in Historical Perspective," Canadian Historical Review 61 (September, 1980), pp.305-33, and Akenson, "An Agnostic View".
- ¹⁸ Donald Harman Akenson, The Irish in Ontario: A Study in Rural History (Kingston, 1984), pp.36,38.
- ¹⁹ See Kenneth Duncan, "Irish Famine Immigration and the Social Structure of Canada West," Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology 2 (1965), pp.19-40 and Parr, "The Welcome and the Wake", pp.101-13.
- ²⁰ See Cecil Houston and William Smyth, "The Orange Order and the Expansion of the Frontier in Ontario, 1830-1900," Journal of Historical Geography 4 (1978), pp.251-64 and Gregory S. Kealey, "The Orange Order in Toronto: Religious Riot and the Working Class," in Kealey and Peter Warran (eds.) Essays in Working Class History (Toronto, 1976), pp.13-34.
- ²¹ See John J. Mannion, Irish Settlements in Eastern Canada: A Study of Cultural Transfer and Adaptation (Toronto, 1974), Akenson, The Irish in Ontario, and Elliott, Irish Migrants.
- ²² Murray W. Nicolson, "The Catholic Church and Irish in Victorian Toronto," Ph.D. Thesis, University of Guelph, 1982. Articles that have come from this research include, "The Irish Catholics and Social Action

in Toronto 1850-1900," in Robert F. Harney (ed.) Gathering Place: Peoples and Neighbourhoods of Toronto, 1834-1945 (Toronto, 1985), pp.30-54 and "Women in the Irish-Canadian Catholic Family," Polyphony 8 (1986), pp.9-12.

²³ See J.C.D. Clark, English Society, 1688-1832: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Practice During the Ancien Regime (Cambridge, 1985), p.ix.

²⁴ John C. Weaver's Hamilton: An Illustrated History (Toronto, 1982) is by far the most comprehensive account of the city's history. Other works that address the pre-1850 era include Marjorie Freeman Campbell, A Mountain and a City: The Story of Hamilton (Toronto, 1966) and Mabel Burkholder, The Story of Hamilton (Hamilton, 1938). Moreover, T. Melville Bailey, Patricia Filer, Robert L. Fraser and John Weaver (eds.) The Dictionary of Hamilton Biography 1 (Hamilton, 1981) is a useful reference source.

²⁵ Weaver, Hamilton, p.10.

²⁶ See Ibid., p.10.

²⁷ See Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., p.16.

²⁹ The Mirror(Toronto), 21 July 1838. PAO.

³⁰ See Houston and Smyth, "Orange Order", and Kealey, "Religious Riot".

³¹ Kealey, "Religious Riot".

³² Elliott, Irish Migrants.

³³ See Parr, "The Welcome and the Wake".

Chapter 2: The Physical Dimensions of an Immigrant Community -
Corktown, Hamilton, 1832-1847

"The notion of space," writes Roberto Perin, "is basic to ethnicity...An ethnic culture cannot survive simply on memories of a distant past."¹ The concept of "ethnic space" has proven useful to historians attempting to explain immigrant settlement in North America. The formation of ethnic enclaves signified immigrants' need for the mutual assistance and cultural regeneration that the "little homeland" provided. A spatial identity fostered a semblance of belonging to a cultural whole. In urban settings, particularly, this ethnic adaptation was visible in the growth of ethnic neighbourhoods and communities. Chicago's "Swede Town" of the mid-1800s, Toronto's "Little Italies," and Hamilton's "Corktown" of the nineteenth-century are in this way evidence of urban immigrants' reaction to North American society. ²

The historiography of immigrant neighbourhoods has undergone significant revision in recent years. Traditionally, historians have adhered closely to the hypotheses of urban sociologists regarding the process of immigrant settlement in North America. Between 1915 and 1940, University of Chicago sociologists Robert Park, Ernest W. Burgess and Louis Wirth established a school of urban research which sought to address the role of immigrant colonies in the twentieth-century city. One product of this research, "ghetto theory", depicted an ecological

pattern of ethnic settlement characterised in three phases. First, the theory held, newcomers arrived in America where, impoverished, they settled in tightly-knit ethnic neighbourhoods. The cultural and moral reinforcement that they received from living among their own kind permitted them to insulate themselves against the culture shock of American life. The group, as it improved its economic and social standing, moved outward to some more desirable residential district, creating an area of second settlement. Finally, a series of movements witnessed a gradual dispersion of the individual immigrants and the dissolution of the ethnic entity. "...[D]iffusion mark[ed] the disintegration of the group and the absorption of the individuals into the general American population."³ This view attributed a central role to the initial immigrant colony as both a reinforcer of ethnic culture and a "way station," of sorts, for immigrants en route to assimilation. For these theorists, moreover, the obverse was also true: immigrant residence outside of the initial colony signified in some degree a rejection of the group's folkways and mores, and a desire to assume the culture of the host society. "[R]esidence within a ghetto," sociologist Walter Firey wrote in 1945, "is more than a matter of spatial placement; it generally signifies acceptance of immigrant values and participation in immigrant institutions."⁴

While its phases are somewhat muted, the ghetto model, implicitly or explicitly, has become entrenched in the writing of American ethnic history. American historians have traditionally regarded the role of ethnic culture in the past as a transitional phase of adjustment. Culture, like the physical space associated with it,

diminished in importance as migrants became "Americanised". Historian Oscar Handlin's research is indicative of this thought. In his 1951 study, The Uprooted, Handlin attempted to construct an historical narrative of the integration of immigrants into American work, culture and society spanning 100 years. In a chapter titled "The Ghettos", his assimilationist perspective is particularly evident;

From the barracklike buildings of the area of first settlement, the immigrants could move out to smaller units where at least the problems of density were less oppressive... [T]he spreading slum engulfed this first refuge, then those who could launched upon a second remove. Then a third. Till at last the city was a patchwork of separated districts... Least capable of organizing their lives to the new environment, the great mass long clustered at the center.⁵

The stages of physical segregation of ethnic cultures, as delineated in the work of Handlin and other traditional historians, revealed the changing salience of the immigrant identity.

More recently, practitioners of the "new social history" in the United States have questioned these assumptions. Armed with methodologies capable of quantifying the concentration of ethnic settlement in nineteenth-century cities, new urban historians have concluded that the residential clustering of immigrant groups in urban America was not as strong as the ghetto model would suggest.⁶ At the same time, empirical evidence in support of the idea that the persistence of ethnic culture within settlement areas remained strong seems quite convincing. Despite the astoundingly high rates of transiency in nineteenth-century North American cities, immigrant areas appear to have been remarkably resilient in retaining their cultural

character.

How, then, does one explain this occurrence? A first reason is relative residential segregation. Although a given group may not even number a majority in a city space, they often form a plurality. Therefore, Detroit's "Corktown" was widely acknowledged as a distinctly Irish neighbourhood despite the fact that Irishmen accounted for only 40 per cent of the area's population.⁷

A second, and perhaps more cogent explanation is notional.

...[T]he location of [an ethnic] group's business, social, and religious institutions was even more conspicuous to those who lived both nearby and farther away. That is, the churches and clubs, plus the bakeries, groceries, butcher shops, shoemakers, tailors, saloons, and restaurants, which directed their services to a specific clientele and were operated by members of a specific ethnic group, helped markedly to define a neighborhood's character.⁸

The nineteenth-century ethnic neighbourhood has proven to be much more of a chimera than traditional historians and their colleagues in the social sciences had realised. The relationships between the ghetto, the immigrant neighbourhood and their superstructural offspring, the cultural community, have not yet found a common configuration in the urban past. One distinctive aspect, common to both models, however, has persisted historiographically. "Ethnic space" in North American cities, whether one resided within its physical boundaries or not, was significant in supporting the cultural retention that immigrants achieved in the nineteenth-century.

This pattern of immigrant spatial identity was evident in pre-Confederation Canadian cities. The settlement of the shanty Irish in

early Bytown and the "tent" Irish of Toronto's Don Valley in this era have been documented by historians, local and professional.⁹ The Irish Catholic enclave of Corktown, Hamilton, Upper Canada provides another good example of this process. Corktown was, for most of the nineteenth-century, a thriving cultural community. An Irish settlement can be said to have existed in Corktown as early as 1832. By 1847, Hamilton's Irish immigrant population had become a cohesive, self-identified community for whom Corktown remained a symbolic centre in North America. A distinctive spatial identity ordered and guided the behaviour of these early Irish settlers in Hamilton in the pre-Famine era. The initial task at hand, then, is to describe from the remaining physical and cultural evidence, the "ethnic space" that was Corktown, 1832-1847. By discussing the magnitude, geographic location and housing of pre-Famine Irish immigrants in Hamilton, much is revealed about the reactions of newcomers to their New World surroundings in a preindustrial, pedestrian city.

The Irish were the single largest immigrant population in British North America throughout the nineteenth century. From the close of the Napoleonic wars until the 1860s, Irish migration surpassed that from England, Wales and Scotland, and, in most years, emigrants from all three countries combined. Unlike the Famine emigrants, Irish migrants of the earlier era were largely Protestant and from the north of Ireland. H.C. Pentland noted that "[i]t was Ulstermen who came almost exclusively in the 1820's and predominantly until 1835".¹⁰

Curiously, Hamilton's pre-Famine Irish population was the

exception to the rule. In large part, the pre-Famine Irish emigrants who built early Corktown were southern, Gaelic, and above all, Roman Catholic. In a recent article on early Hamilton, Michael Doucet and John C. Weaver write;

The Roman Catholic population was an Irish population. The assessment rolls did not record ethnicity, but the names were as good as a shamrock in the lapel on St. Patrick's Day - Patrick Duffy, Patrick Sullivan, Patrick McCluskey, Patrick Brady, Patrick Murray, Michael Doyle, Michael Hogan, Michael Clarke.¹¹

Irish immigration to Hamilton and environs can be dated to about 1830. At that time, several major public works were in need of labourers to complete construction. Public works not only provided an initial economic foothold for newly-arrived Irish labourers in North America, but remained the prime source of immigrant employment in the 1830s and 1840s. The geography of public projects in large part determined the migration patterns and destinations of many of these labourers. In the Hamilton area, three major canal works provided the impetus for migration. The Welland Canal (1824-33), the Burlington Bay Canal (1826-30) and the Desjardins Canal in Dundas (1826-37), in particular, drew Irish workmen from the ports of Montreal and New York, where the majority of Irish emigrants disembarked from their overseas journeys.

The Welland Canal was the first of these major construction projects to create a demand for unskilled labour in the southeastern part of the province. William Hamilton Merritt and the Welland Canal Company employed contractors and workmen from American public works. " Work on the canal attracted a great number of labourers. Experienced

men came with Oliver Phelps from the United States, after the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825. Many were Irish immigrants, willing to do difficult manual labour for the minimal wages offered by the canal company."¹² Other casual labourers arrived at St. Catharines and the construction site via the St. Lawrence route. The Western Mercury of 17 June 1832 remarked: "...The steamer Great Britain arrived yesterday evening, with...upwards of 700 [emigrants] including those in the cabin and infants arrived at York, some of whom (Irish) proceeded on however, to the Welland Canal..."¹³ The Burlington Bay Canal, in the same way, drew Irish workmen to the area. The Irish had by this time achieved a reputation in the Canadas and in the northeastern United States as being particularly adept at canal construction. One author commented that "[t]he wild Irish bogtrotter[s]" had "the ability to withstand sickness though they [were] set to work knee-deep in wet muck wearing naught but a flannel shirt and a slouch hat."¹⁴ As romantic as this depiction may seem, the stereotype often worked to the advantage of the Irish labourers in securing employment.

The labour on these public projects was seasonal, and therefore, many of these labourers were itinerant. The rates of worker transiency both during and after construction season were characteristically high. Pentland asserted that a central mass of Irish workmen comprised almost all of the unskilled labour force in canal building at this time. "The main body made its way, public work by public work, up the St. Lawrence while others came through the United States in the 1830's and 1840's."¹⁶ The migration was continuous, yet the central body's composition was constantly transformed as migrants were disseminated at each public work

locale. The construction of the Desjardins and Burlington Bay canals were, in this way, no different. Having been "sprinkled" in the area, Irishmen who constructed these projects, and their families, were also builders of the early Irish community of Corktown in Hamilton. By April, 1833, the Town could boast a population of 1,075 inhabitants; about 133, or a little more than 12 per cent were Irish Roman Catholics.

Over the ensuing fourteen years, the population trends of Corktown's Irish reciprocated, to some extent, those of Hamilton as a whole. Table 1 bears this out. No gradual pattern of growth was evident here in either case. Rather, a period of growth followed by recession was the norm. The main factor in this equation was, again, the range of impermanent employment positions for working men in Upper Canada in the 1830s. Their solution was transiency - migration to another worksite for casual, seasonal employment. Consequently, although Irish Catholics constituted 12 per cent of the town's population in 1833, by 1836 an appreciable decline in their numbers had taken place. Numerical data to substantiate this conclusion is lacking, but qualitative

TABLE 1: HAMILTON, 1829-1846 - ROMAN CATHOLIC POPULATION AS A PROPORTION OF TOTAL TOWN POPULATION

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>TOTAL POPULATION</u>	<u>ROMAN CATHOLIC POPULATION</u>	<u>%</u>
1829	250 a		
1830		-no data available-	
1831		-no data available-	
1832	825 b		
1833	(i) 1075 (April) b	133 c	(i) 12.37
	(ii) 1275 (May) a		(ii) 10.43
	(iii) 1350 (October) a		(iii) 9.85

1834	(i) 1550 d		
	(ii) 1367 e		
1835	(i) 2000 f		
	(ii) 2155 e		
1836	(i) 2846 e		
	(ii) 1812 e		
1837	(i) 3567 e	(i) 283 h	(i) 7.93
	(ii) 3188 g	(ii) 450 i	(ii) 8.88
			(iii) 12.64
			(iv) 14.12
1838	(i) 3116 g		
	(ii) 3342 j		
	(iii) 3200 k		
	(iv) 3358 e		
1839	2985 g	(i) 428 g	(i) 14.34
		(ii) 400 l	(ii) 13.40
1840	(i) 2986 g	383 g	(i) 12.83
	(ii) 3342 e		(ii) 11.46
1841	(i) 3413 g	566 g	(i) 16.58
	(ii) 3446 e		(ii) 16.42
1842	4260 e		
1843	4860 e		
1844		-no data available-	
1845	6478 e		
1846	6832 e		
1848	(i) 9389	(i) 2760	(i) 29.39
	(ii) 10001 e		(ii) 27.60

Sources:

- a Western Mercury, Thursday, October 25, 1833, p.2, col.5, MLSC.
- b Western Mercury, Thursday, April 25, 1833, p.3, col.2, MLSC.
- c MacDonell Papers, "Census of the Dundas Mission," taken by Rev. John Cassidy. The total figure of 267 is given. A reasonable estimate for Hamilton at this time would be one half of this figure, or 133. ARCAT, M AC04.01.
- d Western Mercury, Thursday, July 17, 1834, p.2, col.6, MLSC.
- e City of Hamilton Directory, 1853, p.4, UDCMU.
- f Charles Durand, The Reminiscences of Charles Durand (Toronto, 1897), p.217.
- g Town of Hamilton, Census and Assessment, 1835-1840, HPLSC.
- h MacDonell Papers, Cassidy to MacDonell, January 14, 1837; Catholic Census taken by Rev. John Cassidy. ARCAT, M AC04.05.
- i MacDonell Papers, Cassidy to Gaulin, December 26, 1837. ARCAT, M CA10.03
- j This figure was written on the outside cover of the 1838 Hamilton Assessment book.
- k E.M.G. MacGill. My Mother, The Judge (Toronto, 1955), p.7.
- l MacDonell Papers, Census sent to Wm. Peter MacDonald, Vicar-General. 400 is listed as "The Number Generally Attending". Another figure, 700, is listed as the parish population. This latter number

likely reflects the *entire* annual parish population, including transient members. ARCAT, M AC23.08 N.B.: "%" refers to the proportion of the Roman Catholic population within the larger town population.

evidence points to this trend. One example is contained in a letter from Reverend John Cassidy, Roman Catholic missionary for the Dundas circuit, to Bishop Alexander MacDonell, dated August 12, 1836 in which Cassidy complains; "...I have been so much wearied out, and tried by the severity of last winter, the lapses of cattle, the decrease of the Catholic population and the poverty of the few that remained...". While the Town of Hamilton in the years 1833 to 1836 grew by almost 1,300, it appears that the proportion of Irish Catholics waned by comparison.¹⁷

The late 1830s in Hamilton brought a reversal of this pattern. Partly because the Town's population decreased markedly, the relative proportion of Irish-Catholics doubled. In absolute terms, by 1839, Hamilton had lost about 9 per cent of the 3,188 people enumerated in 1837 while the Roman Catholic population had increased over these two years by about 2 per cent. This pattern is difficult to explain. It would seem, however, that a decrease in transiency among Irish migrants occurred at this interval, perhaps as a result of the general economic depression of the times and, hence, the fruitlessness of searching for employment. Moreover, the exodus of Reform sympathizers and American patriots to the United States following the unsuccessful rebellion of 1837-8 included very few Irish Catholics. The Catholic Irish in these eventful years maintained a solid reputation for loyalty to the Tory political establishment, and indeed, as the Irish-Canadian organ The Toronto Mirror boasted in January of 1838, were "... active in

endeavouring to put down the rebellion."¹⁸ The republican removal from Upper Canada and Hamilton in 1838-9 meant the consequent rise of the Irish Catholic population there, in relative terms. But another explanation may lie in the presence of a sufficiently critical mass of Irish Catholics to promote confidence in the future of an Irish Catholic community there. By the 1840s, certainly, the qualitative evidence depicts an Irish population established and active in the town. Geographically, moreover, they had become identified with an area which in both cultural and demographic terms served as the symbolic core of the Irish presence in Hamilton.

The physical form of early Hamilton reflected to a great degree the more general pattern of urbanisation that characterised pre-Confederation Ontario towns. Three factors, it seems, worked in consort to determine who would control the most valuable asset that settlers in Upper Canada could obtain: land. Put simply, those who (1) arrived first at a potential urban locale, (2) had capital enough to procure land with which to speculate and (3) persisted the longest were, with few exceptions, the founding fathers of urban Ontario. Hamilton's first town promoters neatly subscribed to all three of these categories.

On January 25, 1815, 1812 War veteran and Queenston merchant George Hamilton purchased 257 acres of land at the Head of Lake Ontario from James Durand, ostensibly to remove his family from the proximate threat of American reprisal. More than domestic security, however, evidently shaped Hamilton's motives in this resettlement. Hamilton must have been conscious of a bill proposed in the Upper Canadian

Legislature, shelved at the outbreak of war, which sought to carve out a new district, "Gore", from the existent Home and Niagara Districts. It is likely that Hamilton had this in mind when he and his neighbour to the north, Nathaniel Hughson, put forth a plan to erect a gaol and courthouse on Hamilton's property to facilitate a district centre. With the close of war, this bill resurfaced creating the new district and district village named Hamilton. On December 30, 1816, George Hamilton offered two blocks of land in Concession 3, Barton Township, to George III for this purpose. This area, bordered by James and Mary Streets on the east and west, and by King and Main Streets on the north and south, is the centre of modern Hamilton (see Map 17).

John C. Weaver has written that essentially two phases of land sales between 1816 and 1830 proved the foundation of Hamilton's early elite. "An initial series of sales involved merchants, builders and speculators." James Mills and Peter Hess purchased land to the west and south of Hamilton's and Hughson's tracts. East of Hess, Peter Hunter Hamilton bought more than 100 acres of land in 1823. A depression in the early 1820s stayed land speculation for several years, but after the middle of the decade land deals in Hamilton resumed their fevered pitch. Allan McNab, for example, began his land dealings in what was to become Port Hamilton in this period. By about 1830, however, the spatial structure of early Hamilton had become crystallised. Those who had arrived earliest acquired preferred town land as well as some of that surrounding its limits. The elevated wealth of these early landowners is beyond question. Speculation had served many of them well financially, in accumulating wealth and in collecting tenant rents.

Finally, many of these town founders persisted in Hamilton, or were succeeded by family members well into the 1830s and 40s. "Basically, the ten original town creators or their children dominated the land market roughly twenty years after their original land acquisitions." Fourteen, or 24.6 per cent of the settlers in the Hamilton area before 1825 were around in 1839 to be assessed for £200 or more by the Board of Police. Among these men were Peter Hess, Nathaniel Hughson, Peter Hunter Hamilton, and Robert J. Hamilton, son of the town founder.¹⁹ By the time Hamilton was incorporated as a town in 1833, the choice land had been selected and settled upon by these early citizens. The remaining land was of marginal use and importance to these speculators. It was the latter region that increasingly after 1832 became home to an Irish, Catholic and working-class population.

The geography of Corktown, as this area came to be known, was distinctive both topographically and in its spatial dynamics. In the first respect, Corktown was located on the least preferred tract of land within the incorporated town. The Irish were, in a sense, victims of the trend of urbanisation in early nineteenth-century Ontario. Those who arrived at a locale earliest, had capital and persisted longest generally acquired choice lands for settlement, improvement and speculation. The Irish had none of these tools for success and, as such, upon arriving in Hamilton were given little choice in their search for a settlement area. In 1833, Miles O'Reilly moved "...to the outskirts of town on a fringe of the wild, wolf-infested forest at the foot of Hamilton Mountain". Elevation in Corktown ranged from 300 to 320 feet, and several streams carrying run-off from the escarpment

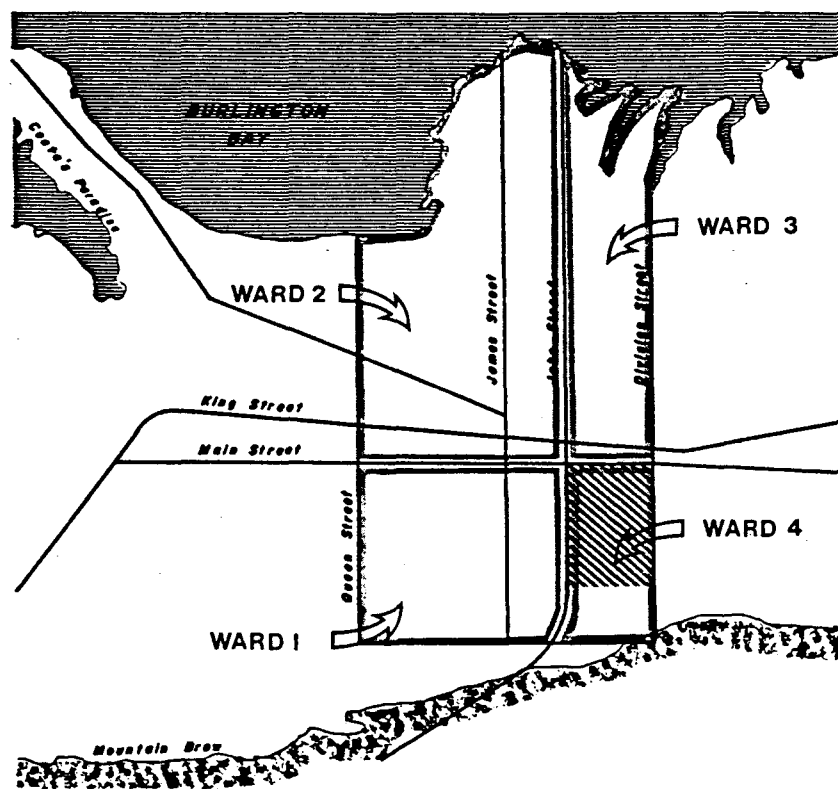
sliced through the immigrant neighbourhood. It was certainly less than desirable real estate. In this respect, the experience of Corktown's residents was similar to that of their countrymen in Montreal's "Griffintown", where "[t]errible floods used to take place annually in the spring, the water sometimes coming up as far as St. James Street so that flat boats had to be used to go to and fro..."²⁰ Unlike Montreal, however, Corktown's geography afforded a unique attribute. "Located in a sheltered depression, backed against the Niagara escarpment Corktown had one alleged advantage. Gardens and fruit trees had greater immunity from frost than elsewhere in the town."²¹ This aspect should not be underestimated considering the importance of the extra-market economy to nineteenth-century working-class families.

Consistent with the pattern of ethnic settlement in other nineteenth-century North American urban centres, the Catholic Irish did not comprise a majority of the residents in Corktown between 1832 and 1847. From an analysis of the Hamilton City Directory of 1853, Ian Davey and Michael Doucet estimate that Irish Catholics numbered about 21.2 per cent of the area's population in that year.²² In the pre-Famine era, their relative percentage could not have been much different from this figure. While no systematic sources exist from this early period to test this assertion, evidence from the 1839 town census and assessment points to this trend. Listed among the assessment's categories are: name of household head; religious affiliation of those in the household; and where the roll states "concession no." and "lot no." the town assessor for that year (Patrick Thornton) entered the name of the street of residence. As noted above, the Roman Catholic

population of Hamilton at this time was virtually synonymous with its Irish cohort. Therefore, a look at the streets of residence of Catholic citizens in 1839 offers a picture, albeit somewhat imprecise, of where Hamilton's Irish settled in the town.²³

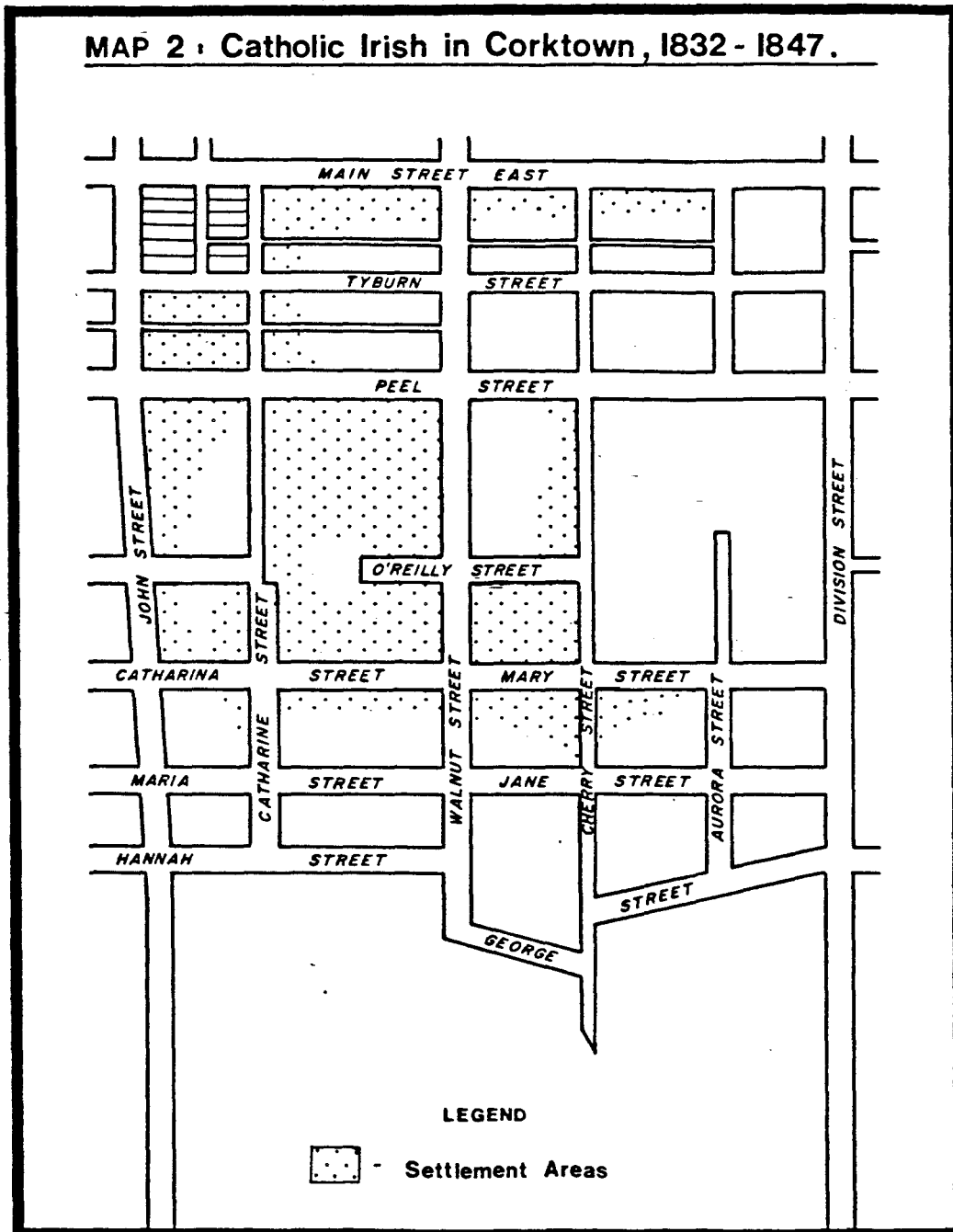
The ethnic geography of the Catholic Irish in 1839 Hamilton is borne out in Map 2. Irish Catholics in the early town tended to settle, certainly, within the southeastern region of Hamilton, if not within the boundaries of Corktown itself. A series of small neighbourhood clusters had begun to develop by 1839. Catholic entries into the census and assessment for this year are peculiar for their tendency to be grouped together within the roll. These source configurations evidence the fact that, in making his rounds, the assessor must have come upon small pockets of Catholic settlement within the southeastern part of the town. Of the 90 Catholic household heads listed in 1839, no greater than about 17 per cent lived on any one street. Again, this points to a pattern of neighbourhood cluster settlement centred around particular street intersections and town blocks. The principal streets which Hamilton's early Irish Catholics inhabited were: John Street - 15 households (16.67 per cent of Catholic households); Walnut Street - 11(12.22); Main Street - 10(11.11); James Street - 10(11.11); Catharine Street - 9(10); McNab Street - 8(8.89); O'Reilly Street - 5(5.56); Cherry Street (later Ferguson Avenue) - 4(4.44); and York Street - 4(4.44).²⁴ Significant clusters of Irish Catholic settlement deciphered from assessment patterns existed along John Street south, near the first town market; along Catharine Street in Corktown north of Young (which later became known as Corcoran's Court in the 1870s and 80s); and throughout the

MAP I : The Town of Hamilton , 1833 - 1847 .



 - CORKTOWN

MAP 2 : Catholic Irish in Corktown, 1832 - 1847.



block bordered by Walnut Street on the west, Cherry Street on the east, and north towards Main including O'Reilly Street. A few Catholic Irish also lived on Main Street itself, likely east of the Courthouse Square. Therefore, by the early date of 1839, a distinctive pattern of Irish Catholic cluster settlement had already emerged. While Catholic Irish did not constitute a majority of the residents in Corktown, the group had established its presence there in some numbers. Catholic settlement was, for the most part, focussed in southeastern Hamilton, with many living within Corktown's physical boundaries. More specifically, a series of small neighbourhood clusters comprised the pattern of Catholic and Irish habitation in the early town.

Other empirical evidence provides a more dynamic picture of the physical development of Corktown from 1832 to 1847. As a contemporary, Charles Durand, recounted in his Reminiscences, there was as yet little activity in the southeastern part of the town in the early 1830s. "Main street east of (James)," he wrote of this time, "was mostly vacant".²⁵ Throughout this period, Corktown's roads were little more than crude paths which separated houses and connected its residents to the town's main thoroughfares. The condition of these routes was a topic of some regularity in newspaper editorials during the 1830s. Large ruts in these dirt roads became stagnant pools of water when rain fell, and in summer months became cause for concern as breeding grounds of disease. The prevalence of cholera in the early 1830s was blamed, in part, on the presence of these "very shameful" puddles. Calls for the use of statute labour to cut drainage channels to alleviate this apparent problem, moreover, almost always accompanied editors' articulation of the

dilemma. By 1842, citizens had grown tired of the Board of Police's piecemeal approach to road maintenance in the early town. In his journal The Catholic, Roman Catholic Vicar-General William Peter MacDonald was perhaps typical in wryly asking; "When will our leading streets, or rather mud-swamps, be Macadamized? - They are, to be sure, annually repaired with a mock labor, of turning mud upon mud, to the useless annoyance and expense of the inhabitants. Were we asked for a name to our new city, we should certainly give it that of Mudville or Miryborough".²⁶ What Macdonald failed to realise, or chose to ignore, was that this repetitive public labour supplied many of his Irish Catholic parishoners with a living wage, as Chapter 3 demonstrates. In any event, the remainder of this era was witness to the physical improvement of Corktown's streets and side-paths, reflecting in some degree the crystallisation of a community there.

The chronology of this physical development in Corktown was the product of two factors. The lack of desirable real estate in Corktown meant that it was one of the last areas to be settled in Hamilton. Its recent immigrant and working-class population, moreover, earmarked it as an area within the early town which warranted less concern than other regions of Hamilton in the eyes of the town fathers. The result was that while street improvements had been well under way in other sections of Hamilton by 1840 (particularly those areas near where elite landowners resided), road improvement did not begin in Corktown until the mid-1840s. The minutes of Board of Police meetings at this time delineate this pattern well. Upper John Street, which bordered on Corktown, was not macadamised until 1844. This artery was considered

the main passageway for farmers travelling down the escarpment to the town to sell their wares, or through the town to York or Niagara, yet it required an appreciable effort by small merchants and businessmen from the southeastern area of town to implore the Board to improve it. Similarly, on April 1, 1844, Miles O'Reilly "and sixty other" Corktown residents petitioned the Board to open Catharine Street, Maria Street and Hannah (later Charlton Avenue) Street in the heart of the ward, to which the Board agreed. By August 11, 1845, the Board had resolved that sidewalks should be laid in Corktown on Tyburn, Walnut, Catharine and Cherry Streets, all four feet in width. While the Board of Police agreed to these developments, it is apparent from the records that they were approved only after some persuasion was exercised from Corktown residents who by this time found that their numbers had outgrown their physical surroundings there. Municipal improvement was a response, albeit a reluctant one, to the physical needs of the Catholic Irish in southeastern Hamilton.²⁷

Alongside population and space, a third element concerns the material foundation which the former constructs upon the latter. Several researchers have convincingly demonstrated that nineteenth-century Hamilton was not characterised by any notable pattern of class-based residential segregation. The rich were neighbours to the poor in the early town.²⁸ Nor did ethnicity determine bloc settlement configurations of pre-Confederation Hamilton. Despite the presumed Irish Catholic ethno-cultural hegemony over this physical space, Corktown was by no means culturally homogeneous. Residents of English,

American, Scottish and Canadian descent lived in close proximity to Corktown's Irish clusters. Furthermore, religious distinctions existed between those of Irish origin. A local historian has written that "Corktown also had its population of Northern Irish; staunch Protestants, not necessarily members of the Orange Lodges, but still firm in their convictions".²⁹ No one area in early Hamilton could be neatly characterised as one dominated by a particular ethnocultural group or by a single socioeconomic class. In Corktown, however, the fact that the Catholic Irish were recent arrivals to the town's social structure combined with their lack of material resources to produce a pattern in which Irish Catholic ethnicity came to be equated with working-class status. Divisions of faith were generally reinforced by socio-economic cleavages, such that the particular combination of being Irish and Roman Catholic spelled, in most cases, a life of material deprivation. Protestant Irish and others in Corktown tended to be men of means. In a physical sense, the most obvious indicator of this disjuncture was evident in the form of housing which predominantly characterised the two groups.

Perhaps the most notable Corktown Irish-Protestant in this era was Miles O'Reilly. O'Reilly was one of Hamilton's most influential lawyers in the 1830s and later became Judge for the Gore District. He was a founding member of Christ's Church Cathedral (Anglican) in 1836, and served on the Board of Police as fifth member in 1838. While he seems to have at all times maintained a friendly relationship with his Catholic neighbours, their material differences were apparent. His estate, "The Willows" on Upper Catharine Street, stood in stark contrast

to the dwellings of the Irish-Catholics which surrounded it. "The house itself," his great granddaughter recounted,

was three bricks thick and three stories high, and with its additions and alterations had all the cellars, stairways, hallways, pantries, sculleries, laundries, serving rooms, nurseries and servants' quarters that the age demanded. Its spacious reception rooms with their high ceilings, embrasured windows and ornamental fireplaces were admirably suited for entertaining...³⁰

For most of Corktown's Catholic residents, such material comfort was well beyond the reach of their aspirations. In fact, for a good portion of the Catholic Irish in this predominantly working-class part of the early town, abject poverty more accurately characterises their day to day experience. Poverty in nineteenth-century urban settings, as Michael Katz has observed, meant absolute deprivation: "... hunger, cold, sickness, and misery, with almost no place to turn for relief".³¹ Housing consisted of shabbily constructed shanties upon arrival, usually followed by rental of a larger frame house in the immediate area. Physically, Corktown was "[u]nquestionably the most miserable part of town...".³² A few, through their persistence in Hamilton, and through careful savings eventually were able to purchase homes, establishing a secure footing for themselves in old age, a roof for their children to inherit, and a means to supplement meagre wage earnings with the marginal economic gains from renting to boarders and lodgers. An 1839 assessment reveals this situation. While Catholics composed about 17 per cent of the town's households, they owned only 7 per cent of Hamilton's two-storey frame, brick, or stone houses.³³

The physical space of Corktown, therefore, reveals some evidence

of the material lives of Hamilton's Catholic-Irish of the 1830s and 40s. Early Corktown's residents were transient, itinerant labourers who used employment on public projects as an initial foothold in the New World. As such, Corktown's population fluctuated in accordance with employment fortunes at home and elsewhere. As latecomers to the town, the Irish were faced with settling on some of Hamilton's poorest residential land. With little capital accumulated, Irish immigrants formed a series of small neighbourhoods in southeastern Hamilton, erecting mean shanties, or renting inexpensive frame housing to live in. Within Corktown, ethnic and religious divisions separated its residents materially. "The dimensions of early nineteenth-century segregation were certainly small in absolute terms - only a few blocks in Hamilton's case."³⁴

However, physical setting can only tell us so much about Irish-Catholics in Corktown. Spatial distinction reveals much more about the ethnic boundaries of a community than the stuff existent within those borders. It is here where the concept of an ethnic community must be differentiated from that of neighbourhood. An ethnic community, James Borchert states, "...in its fullest sense is larger than the sum of its parts".³⁵ It is a network of people sharing a common past and present, a collection of institutions, and a similar world view. The physical dimensions of an immigrant neighbourhood are important, because they offer clues to the material experience of newcomers in North America. This base defined and shaped the behaviour and cognitive identity of the immigrant community, determining, in part, how immigrants made livings for themselves and their families, and secondly, how these newcomers gave cultural meaning to their New World environment. Therefore, this

discussion naturally turns from structures to behaviour and attitudes: the socioeconomic patterns and cultural dimensions of Corktown's Irish before 1847.

Endnotes

¹Roberto Perin, "Clio as an Ethnic: The Third Force in Canadian Historiography," Canadian Historical Review, LXIV, 4 (1983), p.443.

²For studies on these topics, see, for example, Ulf Beijbom, Swedes in Chicago: A Demographic and Social Study of the 1846 - 1880 Immigration (Uppsala, 1971); Robert F. Harney, "Chiaroscuro: Italians in Toronto, 1885 - 1915," Italian Americana, I,2 (Spring, 1976), pp. 142 - 167; and John E. Zucchi, "Italian Hometown Settlements and the Development of an Italian Community in Toronto, 1875 - 1935," in Robert F. Harney (ed.), Gathering Place: Peoples and Neighbourhoods of Toronto, 1834 - 1945 (Toronto, 1985), pp. 121 - 146. The current study attempts to address the latter topic.

³Two of the seminal works in this tradition are Robert E. Park, E.W. Burgess and R.D. McKenzie (eds.), The City (Chicago, 1925) and John Daniels, America Via the Neighbourhood (New York, 1920).

⁴Walter Firey, "Sentiment and Symbolism as Ecological Variables," in Scott Greer and Ann Lennarson Greer (eds.) Neighborhood and Ghetto: The Local Area in Large-Scale Society (New York, 1974), p.278.

⁵Handlin, The Uprooted:, pp.150, 165.

⁶Residential segregation indices calculate the percentage of a certain group which would have to be redistributed for a total residential mixture with native whites to exist. The index ranges from 100.00 to 0.00 -- an index of 100 would denote complete residential segregation: no ethnic intermixture. Conversely, a value of zero would signify even residential distribution -- or, that the proportion of an ethnic group would equal that of native whites. Lower values, therefore, are indicators of high residential intermixture. Examples of some of the literature which has utilized this means of measurement are Sam Bass Warner, Jr., The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of its Growth (Philadelphia, 1968), and Leo F. Schnore and Peter R. Knights, "Residence and Social Structure: Boston in the Ante- Bellum Period," in Stephan Thernstrom and Richard Sennett (eds.), Nineteenth Century Cities: Essays in the New Urban History (New Haven, 1969), pp. 247 - 57. This scale seems to enjoy a popularity among urban quantitative historians.

⁷See Olivier Zunz, The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, and Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920 (Chicago, 1982), pp.129-76.

⁸Howard P. Chudacoff, "A New Look at Ethnic Neighborhoods: Residential Dispersion and the Concept of Visibility in a Medium-Sized City," Journal of American History, 9,1 (June, 1973), p.89.

⁹See Nick Mika and Helma Mika, Bytown: The Early Days of Ottawa (Belleville, 1982), and Murray W. Nicolson, "The Catholic Church".

¹⁰See Akenson, The Irish in Ontario, pp. 8-26, and Pentland, "The Development", p.459.

¹¹Michael Doucet and John C. Weaver, "Town Fathers and Urban Continuity: The Roots of Community Power and Physical Form in Hamilton, Upper Canada in the 1830s," Urban History Review, 13, 2 (October, 1984), p. 84.

¹²From a plaque at St. Catharines Historical Museum. Oliver Phelps was a contractor on the Welland whose innovative engineering techniques made easier excavation and construction on the Welland Canal.

¹³MLSC. The Western Mercury, 17 June 1832, p.2, col.1.

¹⁴Madeline Saddler Waggoner, The Long Haul West (New York, 1958) p. 70.

¹⁵The Western Mercury, 30 August 1832, p. 3, col. 3.

¹⁶Pentland, "The Development", p.13.

¹⁷ARCAT. MacDonell Papers, Cassidy to MacDonell, 12 August 1836.

¹⁸PAO. The Mirror, 6 January 1838.

¹⁹Weaver, Hamilton, p.16 and Doucet and Weaver, "Town Fathers", p.80.

²⁰E.M.G. MacGill, My Mother, the Judge (Toronto, 1955), both p.6.

²¹Doucet and Weaver, "Town Fathers", p. 88.

²²Ian Davey and Michael Doucet, "The Social Geography of a Commercial City, ca. 1853," Appendix One in Michael B. Katz, The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century City (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), p.336.

²³HPLSC. See Town of Hamilton, Census-Assessment 1839.

²⁴Other Hamilton streets containing Irish Catholics were King Street - 3(3.33 per cent), Mary Street - 2(2.22), Wentworth Street - 2(2.22), Jarvis Street - 2(2.22), Anne Street - 1(1.11), Pictou Street - 1(1.11) and Gore Street - 1(1.11). See HPLSC. Town of Hamilton Census-Assessment 1839.

²⁵Charles Durand, Reminiscences of Charles Durand (Toronto, 1897), p.218.

²⁶PAO. The Catholic, 9 March 1842, p.2, cols.3,4.

²⁷See HPLSC. Hamilton Board of Police Minutes, 1 April 1844, and Ibid., 11 August 1845.

²⁸See Davey and Doucet, "Social Geography" and Weaver, Hamilton.

²⁹J.G. O'Neil, "Chronicles of Corktown," Wentworth Bygones, 5 (1964), p. 32.

³⁰MacGill, My Mother, The Judge p. 14. A good deal of information on Miles O'Reilly and other prominent Hamiltonians of this era is available in Bailey, et al.(eds.), Dictionary of Hamilton Biography. For O'Reilly, pp. 160 -1.

³¹Katz, The People of Hamilton p.26.

³²Doucet and Weaver, "Town Fathers", p.88.

³³Town of Hamilton Census-Assessment 1839.

³⁴Doucet and Weaver, "Town Fathers", p.84.

³⁵James Borchert, "Urban Neighbourhood and Community: Informal Group Life, 1850 - 1970," Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 11, 4 (Spring, 1981), p. 614.

Chapter 3: From Countryside to Commercial Town - The Economic
Adjustment of Corktown's Working-Class Irish, 1832-1847

Transatlantic migration for the pre-Famine Irish encompassed a series of life changes and continuities not the least of which concerned vocation. While the complete range of motives behind any emigration is invariably difficult to determine, one factor is notable among the "push" and "pull" forces of nineteenth-century European migration. When conditions in the Old World became such that traditional economic strategies were no longer viable, removal to a place where they could be reestablished was a very real consideration. Famine, drought and the overextension of partible land inheritance practices challenged the ability of the soil to sustain its inhabitants in the early nineteenth-century. Emigration, in one sense, was an important element in European modes of thinking as to how one could cope with adverse economic conditions. Increasingly after 1800, quitting one place to work seasonally or start wholly anew in another became commonplace in the Old World mind as a legitimate economic strategy.¹

It was generally within the context of the institution of the family, moreover, that decisions regarding migration were made. "[E]migration," writes Bruno Ramirez, "involved a strategy; a strategy that the emigrant would sometimes enact as an individual, but more often as member of a family or more extended kinship and community network".² The familism that characterised the nineteenth-century Irish farming

economy is conspicuous in this equation. The society from which the large part of Irish migrants emerged in the 1830s was one entrenched in agricultural, preindustrial and kin-based modes of operation. The family was the principal unit of production and each member was assigned tasks which contributed to the functioning of the whole organism. The ideology of this system was pervasive throughout Irish peasant culture. By the turn of the nineteenth-century in Ireland, a set of beliefs were in existence in which the welfare of the family was placed above the idiosyncratic wishes of any one member.³

Irish land tenure practices which predated and, in many ways, precipitated the "Great Hunger" are familiar ground. Tenant farmers and landless labourers in Ireland in the early 1800s were almost exclusively Roman Catholic, and it was this population that provided the better part of Irish migration to America after 1830. In the late eighteenth-century, Irish agriculture was traditionally practiced in cluster settlements where a number of extended families (cineadh) comprised the whole of a community. The physical geography of these settlements, moreover, was peculiar. In these arrangements, the dwellings of members of a rural Irish community were located centrally, near and facing one another, and often in a circular formation. Their respective agricultural fields projected backwards from the dwellings forming a concentric pattern. The physical setting in rural Ireland in the late 1700s reflected the importance of family and community in Irish life.⁴

Household structure and function in pre-Famine Ireland further illustrate the salience of the institution of the family in rural Irish culture. The "stem family" predominantly characterised family structure

in late eighteenth-century Ireland. Before the close of the Napoleonic Wars, many Irish practiced partible land inheritance, where all sons of a tenant would inherit an equal portion of the land leased. The pre-Famine Irish followed this cultural dictate to the point of rendering some lands agriculturally unviable as a result of their parcellisation. Indeed, this practice was a principal cause for some of the emigration that took place in the early period. What this cultural practice demonstrates, however, is an attempt to provide for the welfare of a family's next generation. When it became impossible to continue this form of land tenure inheritance, new means were devised to provide for the continuation of the family as an agricultural unit.⁵

Household function is also indicative of the familism operative in Irish life at the turn of the nineteenth-century. The successful daily functioning of a family in Irish culture rested upon a very defined division of labour and, as a result, division of status in a household. "It has been said," writes Robert Kennedy in The Irish, "that Ireland is divided by a boundary even more pernicious than that between the North and the South - the boundary between the sexes."⁶ In the early nineteenth-century, the father was the dominant person in the household. Almost invariably, he controlled the family's money and operated the farm's business. He made most decisions concerning inheritance, marriage of his sons and daughters and, notably, emigration of members of his family. An eldest son ranked second in family status. As a principal heir and assistant to his father, he was looked upon as the future of the family and was treated as such. Males inevitably enjoyed higher status than women in early Irish society. One scholar,

in fact, attributes an earlier average age of death for females in Ireland to this pattern. In decision-making, authority and even nutrition, men in early 1800s Ireland were preeminent.⁷ For women, marriage effectively ended a time in their lives when they could work for wages. In that society, for a man's wife to be a paid employee was considered insulting to his character. A woman's domain, rather, was culturally within the household, performing family-related tasks, or if necessary, assisting her husband in lighter agricultural work. Many daughters were permitted to leave home to work for wages as domestics or workers in the woollen trades, yet marriage in pre-Famine Ireland held out little for Irish girls who sought anything more than a life of family-centred functions and status subordination due to gender. Emigration was for many of these people an appropriate solution. "Daughters left rural Ireland not just for a job but for higher status as women and for independence."⁸ In the final analysis, however, it was this definitive, albeit unequal, division of labour and status within the Irish household that supported, in the minds of its members, the economic livelihood of the institution. Larger and lesser roles within it were assigned and accepted for the greater good of the family. In large part, not resentment, as Ellen Horgan Biddle writes, but "[s]ibling solidarity was a natural outgrowth of familism."⁹ In a cultural sense, the economic strategies of the pre-Famine Irish were earmarked by a moral order. When external forces no longer permitted the operation of this ethic, emigration often ensued. Yet, whether it took place initially as single migration or involved an entire family, the reconstitution of the family and its economic

operation was a primary aim.

The early nineteenth-century in North America witnessed the emergence of a significant pattern in settlement. Internal migration pushed the frontier westward across the American mid-west and through western Upper Canada in this period. At the same time, the beginnings of a counter movement were also becoming evident: many American farm families were transferring their labours from agriculture to towns and cities. While not an exodus by any measure, urbanisation in pre-1850 North America was a notable occurrence. Historically, it is within this framework that a significant portion of Irish immigration should be interpreted as well. "[M]uch of Irish emigration was a rural-urban movement which happened to cross international boundaries."¹⁰ While the Yankee farmer in New England and the Upper Canadian yeoman may have differed from the Irish Catholic peasant emigrant in background and world view, their transitions from the country to the city were, in many ways, similar. Each were abandoning familiar, culturally-programmed and previously secure patterns of life for ones new and, it appeared, more promising. The pre-Famine Irish who settled in North American towns and cities before 1850 had an experience common with other early urban dwellers. Large towns and cities were relatively new in North America, and most of their inhabitants were new to the lifestyle that they offered. In particular, Irish society in the early nineteenth-century did little to prepare most Irish migrants for the situation which they were soon to encounter in the New World.¹¹

The initial response of Irish migrants in the St. Lawrence region of Canada and the northeastern United States, as we have seen,

was to cling to public works employment as an economic foothold in the New World. The danger of this accomodation was that public works were soon perceived as something more than a short-term government provision to bridge immigrants' initial unemployment until they could be further integrated into the existing economy. This view was perhaps best depicted by Charles Atherton, a superintendant on Montreal's Lachine Canal in 1843. "Public works," he stated, "are demoralizing at best, and should in my opinion be carried on as far as possible by the local population, and be regarded as the mere helping hand, not the dependence of the Emigrant."¹² Many Irishmen in eastern North America saw otherwise, however, using canal and railway construction as a means of livelihood until well into the 1850s. Some sons of Erin followed Atherton's advice more closely. A good portion of the Irish canal labourers sprinkled into the growing urban centres of eastern North America traded the transitory employment of public infrastructure-building for more sedentary forms of earning a living. Their rural-urban migration was interrupted by a short sojourn in migrant manual labour. For many of Hamilton and Corktown's early Irish settlers, it is this process, quite apparently, which was followed.

Three factors, then, influenced the economic transition of the urban Irish settlers in pre-1850 North America. ¹ Emigration from Ireland almost invariably constituted an element of an economic strategy present in Old World thinking. Second, this strategy was ² inextricably bound with the institution of the family, such that an Irish cultural familism prescribed the roles and aspirations of individual members of the family, at home and abroad. Finally, the Irish economic transition

involved not only migration from the Old World to a New one, but from a rural setting to an urban one as well. These factors characterised the economic niches of Corktown's Irish in the 1830s and 40s. The presence of a family economic strategy in an unfamiliar urban setting eased their physical transition. In the end, the experience of Corktown's pre-Famine Irish served as a foothold in Hamilton's economy for their Famine countrymen after 1847.

12 CHOPPERS WANTED - To chop wood by contract.
Apply to the subscriber. SAMUEL J. RYCKMAN.
Hamilton, 24th December, 1833.

- Western Mercury, January 9, 1834

Terence Branigan convicted on a charge of allowing his Cow to run at large. fined ten shillings. costs four shillings. &6^d.

- Hamilton Board of Police Minutes,
January 26, 1845.¹³

As these notes suggest, two distinct and parallel economies were in operation in early nineteenth-century Hamilton. Both of these systems were integral to the survival of families in the early town, yet in quite separate ways. The first of these, the wage economy, was a family's principal means of support. Put simply, men and women sold their labour to local employers in return for a money payment which was utilised, in turn, to buy household commodities for daily living or was saved for retirement and the purchase of a home. Although the main sustenance of early nineteenth-century households, the cash economy

could by no means operate alone. Employment for workingmen in Upper Canada of the 1830s and 40s was often seasonal and short-term - too insecure to provide a permanent living for many families.¹⁴ As a result, working-class families devised economic strategies to function alongside the proper market economy. Family economies were shaped and reshaped to supplement the realities of survival on wages. Bettina Bradbury notes of late nineteenth-century Montreal; "Animal raising, gardening, domestic production, the taking in of boarders, and doubling up in living spaces with other families, all represented methods of retaining an element of self-sufficiency - of producing something that could either be used directly for food or exchanged for cash".¹⁵ The flexibility of this extra-market economy, moreover, was perhaps its greatest attribute. The family economy could be reproduced in any locale where at least one member of the family could find wage work. This combination of economic means was present among Corktown's Irish, 1832-1847. While wage labour comprised the chief source of sustenance for Hamilton's Irish, the family economy supplemented the household's cash income. Moreover, these strategies were complementary of the way in which Catholic Irish migrants organised family functions. The division of labour that characterised the familism of the Irish peasant farm was transferred in practice to the urban setting of Corktown.

Social structural rigidity and capitalist labour demand are two closely related themes which broadly characterise the state of the economy of Upper Canada in the 1830s and 40s.¹⁶ The history of Corktown's Catholic Irish in Hamilton's pre-1850 wage economy must be interpreted amid these two elements. The social structure of early

Hamilton was well-defined. The basis of class hierarchy in the town before the onset of industrialisation lay in the acquisition of mercantile capital. Land was one means. As noted above, early arrival in Hamilton ensured speculators of choice land acquisition for profit-making through resale. Another way, however, was to provide services in the early town such as tailoring, boot and shoe making and carriage making, which would elevate one's financial and social standing through business.¹⁷ Yet, to follow the latter route one would have had to arrive in possession of capital in order to succeed immediately. The Irish Catholics who came to Hamilton from the public works of eastern North America in the early 1830s had neither of these attributes. "[T]he town's Roman Catholic community," Michael Doucet and John C. Weaver note of Hamilton in this era, "demonstrates the disadvantages of having arrived too late to have seized ground-floor opportunities and to have landed without material assets or metropolitan connections sufficient to launch enterprises in self-employment."¹⁸ Hamilton's social structure had congealed by 1830, and by the time most Catholic Irish had arrived, the only room left in the town's class hierarchy was at the bottom. Furthermore, this pattern would not change until well into the late nineteenth-century. To be Catholic *and* Irish was virtually synonymous with being working-class in Hamilton and Corktown from the 1830s until the 1870s. The economic niche that Corktown's Irish established in the town's wage economy continued to be inhabited by and passed on to Irishmen for some time after the Famine exodus. More significantly, specific trades and labouring positions that Corktown's Irish procured in the 1830s remained within the Irish

community in the 1850s, 60s and 70s.¹⁹ Initially, the skills that the rural Irish had to offer to the growing town were few. Agriculture had not prepared many Irish urban immigrants well for prosperity in a New World where success in large part rested upon the amount of one's capital or one's ability to turn artisanal talent into a mercantile service. The experience of some as labourers on the canals and railways of North America in reality did little to increase their skills above a manual level and effectively entrenched in the minds of employers the stereotype of the Irish wage earner as unskilled brute. The category that a majority of Corktown's residents fit into in this period was that of itinerant labourer, working when work was available and searching for it, sometimes in other towns and cities, when it was not.²⁰

The second factor that shaped the economic face of Hamilton's Irish is equally important. The class structure of pre-1850 Hamilton had been crystallised by the time of the emergence of an Irish Catholic community. Admittedly, a small number of Irish Catholics had by the end of this era become established in the town's middling orders, mostly in mercantile and artisanal pursuits.²¹ For the most part, however, early Hamilton's social structural rigidity left room economically for the large part of these emigrants only at the bottom. However, it is significant that there was room for the Irish in that socio-economic scale at all. In this regard, it was much easier to be a Catholic Irishman in Hamilton in the pre-Famine era than it was to be so after this period. Principally labourers, many Irishmen in Hamilton in the pre-Famine era were well-received because they played a vital socio-economic role in the early town.

Indicative of this was the means by which Irishmen in the 1830s acquired employment. To be sure, in this era, some Irishmen in Hamilton may have been able to procure wage work on their own, simply soliciting a position from one of the town's early employers. However, another facility was afforded newcomers in search of paid employment which appears to have had particular use by the Irish community. By the early 1830s, a growing concern among Hamilton's town fathers centred on the future prosperity of the town. As principal landowners in Hamilton, their personal interests were intimately tied to its growth as an urban trade and service centre. As a port it would benefit from the increasing numbers of farmer-settlers passing through Hamilton each spring and summer on their way to the Canada Company lands in western Upper Canada. Their concern, however, was rooted in the fact that the young town lacked the infrastructure necessary to be a "gateway to the west" and was presumably exacerbated by the effect of watching boatload upon boatload of potential Hamilton settlers passing through en route to the Huron tract. Their response was an attempt to attract some of these migrants to Hamilton. To this end, the Gore Emigrant Society was established in May, 1832, consisting of many of Hamilton and Gore District's most influential men. A meeting of the Society's over sixty members in June, 1832 included such names as George Hamilton, Richard Beasley, Robert Land, Colin Ferrie, Allan McNab, James Racey and John Law.²² The Society acted as a land and housing registry for arriving emigrants of more comfortable circumstances; but more important to its members, it served as a clearing house for labour for those builders and enterprising artisans who had the potential to enhance the investments

of the town fathers. Naturally, this service was also of appreciable use to recent Irish emigrants in search of work. An article on the Society's deliberations in the Western Mercury in summer, 1832 announced that

The Secretary and agent to the Society [Thomas Racey] has established his office directly opposite C. Ferrie & Co.'s Store, where he will be ready to receive... all applications for the hiring of Laboring men, Servants, Mechanics &c., and he requests that all Emigrants who are wishing for employment to call at the office for information, and have their names registered.²³

It is significant, moreover, that the Society proposed to find employment for newcomers in precisely those paid positions which were to become distinctively Irish in character over the following four decades: common labourers; building tradesmen; and domestics. This suggests that indeed it was Irishmen who were the principal beneficiaries of the Society's efforts.

Other such labour employment centres were of some benefit to Hamilton's Irish population in the 1830s and 40s. William Cattermole, a Canada Company land agent and auctioneer in the Gore District who claimed responsibility for encouraging the emigration of some 6,000 British citizens to the Canadas also acted as a labour registrar in early Hamilton. Under the title "MUTUAL WANTS AND WISHES," Cattermole advertised his services in the Western Mercury in February, 1834 facilitating "Persons in want of situations and employments, as Journeymen and Laborers".²⁴ In the 1840s, these services were still active; however, they had become more specialised as the town's labour needs had developed. For example, Samuel J. Ryckman, John Morrison and

J. Bray each advertised registries specifically for domestic servants in Hamilton journals in the mid-1840s.²⁵

The lack of skills that characterised many Irishmen upon their arrival in Hamilton in the 1830s was a potential threat to the transition of Irishmen into a sedentary labour pattern and ultimately to the establishment of an Irish Catholic community there at all. That labour registries facilitated this transition, then, is evident. The place of wage work within the family, again, was confined to the roles of particular members of Irish households. Fathers and elder sons in the Irish community were primary in this regard and it was they who comprised the majority of common labourers and, to a lesser extent, skilled builders in early Hamilton. Conversely, unmarried daughters of Irish families made up a good portion of the paid servant population in the early town. The channelling of Irish men and young women into specific wage labour roles satisfied the division of labour within Irish households as well as the labour demand of Hamilton from 1832 to 1847.

The stereotypical "Paddy", the unskilled Irish labourer, was a phenomenon by no means unique to Hamilton or Corktown of the 1830s and 40s. Itinerant Irish labour was the hallmark of the growth of towns and cities throughout North America in the middle decades of the nineteenth-century. "The migration of Irish peasants, mostly from Munster and Connaught," H.C. Pentland noted, "was to provide the main constituent of Canada's capitalist market."²⁶ In Hamilton, their presence was of mutual benefit to them and the interests of the town fathers. The Irish filled a labour vacuum in pre-1847 Hamilton that made them essential to the growth of the town.

Evidence that documents the patterns of itinerant labour in early Hamilton is fragmentary. Unskilled Irish workers appear in records recounting many construction projects including that of Allan McNab's residence, "Dundurn", beginning in 1834.²⁷ Irish labourers took work in Hamilton as it was presented to them on a daily, weekly or, if fortunate, seasonal basis. Notably, the Irish in Hamilton before 1847 were particularly successful at translating sundry and insecure employment into a permanent presence.

Dock work, in the town's North end, was one of these opportunities. Irish labourers congregated at the wharves at the foot of James Street to procure wage work in the town's shipping trades. The growth of Port Hamilton and its colourful taverns in the North end were in some part attributable to the presence of these Irishmen.²⁸ Although seasonal in nature, labour on the wharves provided needed income for many of Hamilton's Irish. Seasonal farm labour in the town's hinterland was another. In some cases, labour registries in 1830s and 40s Hamilton targeted their newspaper advertisements at area farmers in search of available hands. Similarly, maintenance work on the Desjardins and Burlington Bay Canals provided work for Corktown's Irish, some of whom had laboured on their initial construction.²⁹

For many of Corktown's Irish in this era, however, public works continued to be the chief source of keeping afloat financially in the early town. Hamilton's Board of Police, from 1833 to 1847, became a major employer of its citizens through infrastructure construction and maintenance. Documenting the payment of individual residents for constructing and macadamising roads, laying sidewalk, burying deceased

paupers and other municipal functions consumes the better part of the pages of Hamilton's town records in this era. Irish names are conspicuous in these reports as major recipients of the Board's work issuances. In some cases, this work was even solicited by the potential recipients themselves. "Hugh Sweeney's offer," the Board minutes of May 14, 1838 read, "for cleaning out the old well in the Court House Square, and on the corner of John and Concession Streets, and build it up to the former height for &8.5.0 was received."³⁰ Similarly, on February 8, 1836, "[t]he Board audited Timothy Lowthian's account for taking care of a pauper and for supplying him with necessaries [-] &5.10."³¹ Some Irishmen in this period sought to make a living wage from the practice of soliciting various and consecutive jobs in public employment. One example of this behaviour belongs to Darby O'Keef, an Irish-Catholic whose name is listed on the Board's pay rolls for sundry employment from 1837 until 1845. In summer months O'Keef was paid for working on the construction of roads and sidewalks, and in winter, for the clearing of snow from those very same paths. Happily, documentation on O'Keef's payment records remains in full for a period from September 14 to December 14, 1840. Working under Samuel Lovell, O'Keef managed to earn a total of &15.18.6 over these four months. On average, O'Keef brought home &3.19.71/2 per month in this period in wages, a figure which is well above the average monthly earnings for day labourers in Upper Canada in this era.³² In 1839, O'Keef, his wife, son and three daughters rented housing on James Street and owned one milch cow, surviving, however, on the comparatively handsome wage that the Town of Hamilton saw fit to afford him. Another example is Peter Cronan,

who in the same way used employment on public works in the town as the main wage source in his household. Cronan's name appears often alongside that of O'Keef, the first of which is in the Board minutes of 1839. Cronan continues to appear into 1846, at the end of the pre-Famine era. Like O'Keef, Cronan worked on street and sidewalk construction and snow clearing. By the time of the census-taking in 1839, civic works employment allowed him, his wife, three sons and three daughters the fiscal capacity to purchase one town lot, upon which they had built a frame shanty and kept one milch cow.³³ These examples are indicative of a emerging Irish Catholic reliance on the public purse for wage employment in Hamilton. The Roman Catholic Vicar-General, Reverend William Peter MacDonald noted in the spring of 1841 that "...happily... the public works are beginning to provide our people with the means to make themselves more comfortable".³⁴ The Catholic Irish in Corktown in this era realised that while not entirely reliable, public works employment would be available to those who sought it at most times of the year.³⁵ Unskilled labour was an economic way of life for many of Corktown's Catholic Irish, and public works in the town made possible a sedentary living in early Hamilton.

Some of Corktown's wage earners found work in the town's building trades. The sporadic growth of Hamilton in the 1830s and 40s provided ample employment for Irish hands skilled in carpentry, stonemasonry and bricklaying. The Western Mercury of Thursday, October 25, 1832 was pleased to note that "...such an improvement ha[d] taken place that... every carpenter, mason, plasterer and painter that could be obtained, has been kept in work for the two last seasons". The same

journal reported in July of 1834 that "...70 new buildings have been commenced in this town since the first date of January last, and there is every probability that 100 more will be in progress before January next."³⁶ The impression that emerges is that Irishmen comprised a significant portion of the tradesmen and labourers involved in early Hamilton's building sector. Specific artisanal skills may not have been among the talents that most Irish migrants brought with them over the Atlantic, but it is conceivable that several months' apprenticeship as assistant to or labourer with a carpenter would prepare a newcomer for the performance of that trade. Fragmentary evidence documents the presence of Irishmen who became skilled in these trades in early Hamilton. The example of James Flanagan, one of these skilled tradesmen in pre-Famine Corktown, is passed down only by coincidence. In September, 1838, Flanagan was found almost naked in an abject state of drunkenness in the cellar of an unoccupied house. He died shortly thereafter from excessive diarrhoea brought on by his intemperance. Flanagan, the Toronto-based Irish newspaper The Mirror reported later that month, "had been for several days intoxicated ...[H]e had pledged his carpentry tools to procure liquor, and finally parted with his clothes for the same purpose. He was about 35 years of age".³⁷ Other evidence of Irish building tradesmen in Hamilton is equally as fragmentary. Hamilton newspapers in this period entertained articles placed by Irishmen searching for their relatives in the New World. One notable example, James Silk in January, 1832 was looking for his brother "John McNamara (alias Silk) mason and brick-layer, who emigrated from Dunvargan, county of Waterford in Ireland".³⁸

Wages for skilled workers in the building trades reflected a high demand for new housing in 1830s Hamilton. The growth of new mercantile establishments in this era depended upon the town's ability to facilitate people's housing needs. In addition, the presence of many of these needed workers rested upon the payment of a healthy wage. Consequently, the wages earned by Hamilton's workers in construction trades compared well to those of other growing Upper Canadian towns in this period. In 1833, according to the Western Mercury, journeymen carpenters earned 5s. 7 1/2d. per day; and stonemasons, plasterers and bricklayers 6s. 9d. per day - pay well within the upper range of average wages in Upper Canada in the 1830s.³⁹ Work in the building trades, therefore, was another source of wage income for Irish Catholics in pre-1850 Hamilton. The demand for hands in these trades was great throughout this period, and the wages paid to Hamilton's carpenters, masons and bricklayers were reflective of this situation, supplying the Irish Catholics among them with the means to translate their wage into a satisfactory living.⁴⁰

The final main wage labour category that many in Corktown's Irish Catholic population inhabited before 1850 was that of domestic servant. Throughout the nineteenth-century, this type of wage work in North America was peculiar in its character: the people who became domestic employees in the New World were predominantly female and Irish.⁴¹ As in manual work, the Irish filled a great demand for domestic labourers that existed in North America from the 1830s until the 1890s. The stereotypical "Bridget", like her counterpart in the realm of physical labour, was a very real phenomenon who played a role

of mutual benefit to herself and the more established sort of the host society. When the Irish arrived in the early 1830s, the demand for domestic workers was great and the competition for these positions tiny. Writing in the 1840s, Susanna Moodie likened this situation to that of the servant market in England and found the comparison wanting. "[I]n Canada, the state of things in this respect is wholly reversed. The serving class, comparatively speaking, is small, and admits of little competition."⁴² Like Douro Township and most other places in Upper Canada in the 1830s, Hamilton had an open domestic servant market. Moreover, it was predominantly Irish Catholic females who enjoyed its abundant wage opportunities.

Significantly, for Irish girls wage work as domestic servants in Upper Canada in this period was complementary to the cultural familism of the Irish household. In her study of Irish-American women in the nineteenth-century, Erin's Daughters in America, Hasia R. Diner sees a consistency in the gender division of families in Ireland and their New World counterparts. "Irish women," she writes, "had been reared in an environment characterized by rigid sex segregation... To them, the idea of them living apart from their communities, apart from Irish men, would not have appeared aberrant..."⁴³ Paid domestic labour, then, fit well within Irish and Irish-Canadian cultural mores. The factor of age is relevant also. It was, almost always, unmarried Irish girls that composed the majority of paid domestic employees. As noted above, marriage effectively ended the period in most Irish women's lives when they might work for wages. Not unlike Michael Katz's depiction of youth in Hamilton in a later era, adolescence for Irish females in 1830s and

1840s Hamilton signified a period of "semi-independence" and fiscal contribution to the family economy.⁴⁴ Almost immediately upon their arrival, Irish girls assumed this role in the town's labour market. Roman Catholic missionary John Cassidy footnoted his 1833 enumeration of the Catholic population in the region, by stating that "...the Census for Hamilton and Dundas is rather incomplete as far as regards single adults, many of them... being at Service in protestant families."⁴⁵ If having their young labour in Protestant homes disturbed the Irish in early Corktown, it apparently did not overshadow the usefulness of the supplementary wage that their offspring offered the family.

The census-assessment for Hamilton in 1839 demonstrates the pattern emerging before 1850. While the categories given in this assessment do not allow the researcher to be as precise as one might wish in identifying this pattern, the trend manifests itself generally. "Males - under 16/over 16", "Females - under 16/over 16", and religion are the categories in this document which enable one to make broad estimates. In the Roman Catholic population of Hamilton in 1839, only six of ninety households had more than one female over 16 years of age in them. Two of these, moreover, are exceptional: John Bradley's household (enumerated as having 11 members) doubled as an inn; and Calvin McQueston's household was a manufactory.⁴⁶ Catholic servants are far easier to identify in Protestant households. Twenty-five Protestant households in 1839 Hamilton had Catholic residents in them, all very likely domestic servants. Among these households were those of John Young, Robert J. Hamilton, James Ritchie, Robert Hughson, Daniel McNab and Miles O'Reilly, most having more than one Catholic servant. All

told, 37 of 428 Catholics in Hamilton, or 8.64 per cent were enumerated as members of Protestant households in 1839. Considering that domestic servants usually ranged from the ages of 11 to 19 years, these proportions are particularly significant.⁴⁷ Quantitatively, unmarried Irish domestics in Hamilton replicated the patterns of their Irish sisters elsewhere in North America. In early Hamilton, it was, by and large, Protestants who composed the wealthier elements of this urban society and it was them alone who could afford domestic service.

Qualitative evidence sheds light on the conditions of their employment. It was Irish labourers who helped construct Allan McNab's "Dundurn" in the 1830s and it was Irish domestics who, in part, staffed it thereafter. "A staff of ten or more was responsible for the upkeep of the home. They worked sixteen hours a day and received little remuneration except room and board."⁴⁸ At Miles O'Reilly's "The Willows" in this era, the household head seemingly demanded less of his Irish servants than McNab did. O'Reilly's great-granddaughter wrote of "...the supercilious Miss Oakes with her seamstress Miss Fisher [who] took over the sewing-room to draught, cut, fit and finish inner and outer garments, maids' uniforms and dresses and household linen."⁴⁹ Located within Corktown, "The Willows" employed Irish Catholics whose own families may have resided quite proximately to that place of employment.

While securing employment in domestic service may have been facilitated by a favourable labour market for Irish girls, their remuneration lacked the same generosity. It is reasonable to expect that female domestic servants' wages in Hamilton, like those of

labourers and skilled builders, approached the average wages paid for that category in 1830s and 40s Upper Canada. It is notable that the wages paid to female domestics in this era are considerably less, on a monthly basis, than those of common labourers or, significantly, of male domestics. While pay for female domestics ranged from & 0.16.0 to & 0.35.0; & 0.16.0 to & 0.20.0; and & 0.16.0 to & 0.24.0 in 1830-34, 1837, and 1840 respectively, the pay for male servants in these years ranged from & 0.30.0 to & 0.50.0; & 0.32.0 to & 0.40.0; and & 0.30.0 to & 0.40.0.⁵⁰ The crux of this pattern rests in the general attitude of the times towards the function of female wage labour. Despite its abundance, female domestic labour in Upper Canada of the 1830s and 40s was viewed by most of the population as a wage supplementary to a family's income, and consequently it was remunerated as such.

Irish Catholic wage labour in Hamilton in the 1830s and 40s appears to have been channelled quite distinctively. It was essentially in three areas of work that the large part of Corktown's paid labourers invested their efforts. The gender division within these areas, moreover, is of some note. Corktown's male wage earners in this era were concentrated in manual labour and the building trades while their unmarried daughters formed the main supply to the paid domestic servant market. In securing employment, sustaining work and, for the most part, pay, Catholic Irish wage earners were well-received by the class of Hamilton's employers and speculators who had much to gain from the presence of an able and reliable wage labour force. The characteristic openness of the lower echelons of early Hamilton's economy was perhaps its most notable feature, and one which would soon change with the

arrival of thousands of diseased and penniless Famine Irishmen, ill-equipped to make the economic transition that their countrymen had in an earlier era.

As much as early Hamilton's town fathers and employers facilitated the transition of Catholic Irish migrants into wage work, for most of Corktown's families in this era, wages alone were not enough. The reliance of Irish workers on seasonally-based employment and their sensitivity to broad provincial booms and depressions rendered these labourers at the mercy of economic forces beyond their influence. The fluctuation of wage labour fortunes in Hamilton and Upper Canada in the 1830s and 40s meant financial insecurity at even the best of times for Irish Catholic workers. One response to this economic environment was transiency.⁵¹ When wage work opportunities in one locale appeared to be beyond immediate recovery, Upper Canadian urban labourers moved on to other towns and cities where employment prospects seemed more promising. For some of these emigrants, departure was to prove permanent. The general economic depression in Upper Canada in 1837 and 1838 in particular prompted a great deal of internal migration. Some Irish Catholic labourers in Hamilton reacted to this situation in the same way. "The whole people appear," a sympathetic editor of the Irish Mirror noted in August, 1838, "like the swallows in Autumn, preparing for migration. We cannot condemn laboring men from going, as there is not labor of any description to be had in the Province...".⁵² Canal works in Michigan and Illinois drew the bulk of those who departed at

this time, many of whom were hands experienced in canal labour from eastern North American sites. A second type of transiency, however, appears to have been more sensitive to the annual fluctuations in employment fortunes and, as such, was perhaps more common in this era than permanent departure. A seasonal pattern of Irish labour migration occurred alongside that of workers quitting a place "for good". The mid-1830s, again, is a period when this pattern is in evidence among Corktown's Irish labourers. In a letter to his Bishop complaining of the lack of support that he was receiving from his Catholic congregation in August, 1836, Cassidy noted this trend. "A great portion of my flock," he stated, "are all the summer off to the States to earn a livelihood and to provide for their families against another winter."⁵³ His comment suggests that their return was anticipated and indeed that this sort of migration was not at all uncommon. Irish wage earners viewed internal migration in much the same light that they saw emigration: when the economic circumstances required it for the survival of a family economy, it was practiced - often seasonally and, if circumstances demanded, permanently.

Beyond the income of wages in Irish households in the New World, an alternative economy lay in operations transforming wages into sustenance and shelter and supplementing its sometimes meagre yield. The extra-market economy was, like its wage counterpart, an element of family economic strategies employed by working-class households throughout the nineteenth-century. The familistic division of labour within Irish Catholic households defined the roles that were played culturally within this sphere. While Irish men, older sons and

unmarried daughters brought home cash wages to the family's economy, Irish women and children raised livestock, kept vegetable gardens, housed boarders and lodgers and operated petty enterprises which, combined, kept the Catholic Irish household in 1830s and 40s Corktown fiscally afloat.

"The importance of the family in Ireland," Diner has noted, "centred significantly on economic production. The family needed the labors of all to survive."⁵⁴ The role definition that characterised Catholic rural households in Ireland was replicated in its North American form. In 1830s Upper Canada, the peculiarities of Irish gender spheres were noticed by journals and newspapers of the era. Irish men and women spent very little of their work and leisure time together. That conflict may have often emerged from this practice is no great surprise. The Hamilton-based Catholic journal The Liberal made light of this relationship poetically in July, 1844:

Says Dick to Jack, "Your neighbor say,
You wrangle with your wife each day."
"Pooh ! Pooh !" says Jack, "they only joke:
'Tis now a fortnight since we spoke."⁵⁵

Another incident mentioned in the Hamilton journal, Commercial Advertiser, confirms this impression. The report of the Police Board deliberations in the July 10, 1846 edition quotes the proceedings in full detail. At this particular meeting, an Irishman, Robert McMichael, was fined for his wife being drunk and fighting with their neighbour, John Minnus. "Margaret McMichael appeared before their worships ornamented with a pair of black eyes, and almost half a dozen patches on her face." Unable to pay her fine, the court was forced to retrieve her

husband to do so. "McMichael," the article reads, "who seemed to be an industrious, decent man, said he would not pay any more fines for her or her d[amne]d rows..." "The fact is," he continued,

one is as bad as the other. My wife sells the feathers out of my bed to Mannus [sic] for whiskey, and then they both get drunk and kick up a row... [T]he devil a farthing will I ever pay for her again. They're a pair of f[ool]s, and be gorra ye may fine and confine them for all I care.⁵⁶

So saying, Mr. McMichael promptly departed from the Board office. The image stereotypical of an Irish marriage, complete with engagements well removed from the Queensbury Rules remains intact in North America in this period. Yet, while the division of labour within Irish households in Upper Canada served to separate Irish men and women on an affectional level, it was their economic unity that remained paramount in importance. The editor of the Mirror perhaps had this notion in mind when he offered advice to prospective matrimonial partners in September of 1837. "[I]f you are to live separate," he advised,

it is better not to come together... Choose a mistress from your own equals. You will be able to understand her character better and she will be more likely to understand yours. No woman ever married into a family above herself who did not try to make all the mischief she could in it.⁵⁷

In a practical sense Irish marriages sought principally to connect partners with their most economically compatible mates.

The role of women in the family economy was of utmost importance to its survival. Irish women commanded the extra-market sphere of the family economy and were expected to reproduce and provide an atmosphere for the nurturing of the next generation of Irish workers. The life

cycle for Irish women in nineteenth-century North America, however, remained one of culturally-assigned stages which appear to have been increasingly confining as one advanced in years. Irish girls in their pre- and early teenage years were able and expected to assist in the operation of the family household, performing petty chores within the home. A stage of semi-independence was achieved when some of these girls reached an age old enough to work as resident domestic servants in other households. Their wages, however, were in many cases forwarded to their own families for inclusion in their household economies. This stage normally lasted until a young woman was married, effectively replacing her familial allegiance, productivity and, above all, reliance from one institution to another. For almost the entire duration of their lives, Irish women were economically and culturally tied to a family as a means of economic survival and contribution.⁵⁸

Conversely, the security of a family economy could be quickly reversed. The sudden loss of a key wage earning member of a family could prove devastating to the remaining kin. This danger, moreover, was particularly high considering the number of high-risk labouring positions that Irishmen held in the economy of the 1830s and 40s. Destitute widows and their families were in evidence in Hamilton and Corktown in this period, as even a cursory glance at the town's Board of Police minutes would indicate. Some Irish women in this situation were forced to appeal to the Board for assistance. On August 24, 1840, for example, "[a]n application was made by Mrs. McCulloch for relief, she having lost her husband and being destitute." Similarly, in January, 1845, Mrs. McNamara and Mrs. Mahon, "destitute widows", were granted ten

shillings each by the Board of Police.⁵⁹ Other women were pushed to more compromising and tragic ends as a result of losing their partners. One example of particular note concerns Mary Ann Redmond, whose advertisement in the Western Mercury of May 3, 1832 read:

INFORMATION WANTED - The Subscriber is desirous of hearing from her husband Patrick Redmond, who left York, Upper Canada in the month of May, 1831, and was living at the Albion Mills in the Gore District in October last, since which he has not been heard of... Any information concerning him will be thankfully received.⁶⁰

Several years later, her name appears again in the town's records, but this time she was apparently working as a prostitute due to her depressed economic circumstances. On July 23, 1838, "Mary Anne Redmond was complained of as a common strumpet[,] Fined 30[d.] and c[osts] and committed [to gaol] in default for 30 days."⁶¹ Once placed outside of a culturally-programmed family economy, Irish women in North America were forced to fend for themselves in an often unwelcome and volatile economic setting. It was within the family economy, however, that Irish women were most productive (and unfortunately, most historically invisible).

"[U]rban workers... devised means to remain self-supporting. Their instinct was to bring the farm into the town."⁶² The face of North American towns and cities in the nineteenth-century was significantly different than it is today. Early urbanisation involved a rural-urban migration from frontier areas to growing service centres. The growth of Hamilton in the 1820s and 30s was due, in large part, to this peopling process. Upper Canadian yeomen, Yankee farmers and

British emigrants from rural backgrounds comprised most of the immigration to the town in this era. The cultural baggage that these migrants brought with them taught them how to survive in an insecure economy. Rural means were applied to an urban situation, and it was women and children who operated this transition on a daily basis.

Animal raising in backyards, adjacent fields and vacant lots in the growing town was one way of adding some security to a wage income. Pigs, cows, goats and chickens were in evidence in most nineteenth-century Canadian towns and cities, signal of the plight of the workingman in this period and revealing of some of the more basic elements in the process of urbanisation. Animals were a valuable investment to the working class because they could be kept relatively inexpensively in summer months and slaughtered as winter came on to avoid high fodder and shelter costs, in the process providing meat for meals and resale. They could also be obtained quite readily, by purchase from a nearby farmer or by theft.⁶³ Irish Catholics in early Hamilton brought with them a rural heritage in which livestock played a vital role in family sustenance. The Police Board minutes for the pre-Famine era are rife with instances which tell of Irish residents permitting their livestock to roam about, feeding on neighbours' lawns and gardens. On February 23, 1846, "James Mullin [was] convicted on a charge of allowing his Cow to run at large," for which he was fined five shillings and costs. The following September, Dennis O'Donnell was similarly convicted " on a charge of Allowing his pigs to run at large."⁶⁴ This situation was one of apparent concern to the Board in the pre-Famine era, so much so that they undertook to appoint a town

pound-keeper in 1834 to collect livestock which had strayed from their owners' yards. It is notable that for most of this period (1837 to 1847), an Irish Catholic, Michael Hogan, filled this position.⁶⁵

"Cultural traditions and class position combined to identify pigs with the Irish."⁶⁶ It is significant, however, that in spite of the greater expense, Irish Catholics in early Hamilton raised a substantial number of milch cows as well. Of the town's 214 milch cows counted in 1839, Roman Catholics owned 28, or about 13 per cent. It is unfortunate that in the early town assessments account was not taken for other sorts of livestock, such as chickens.⁶⁷ Early Hamilton afforded its residents the ability to supplement their wage earnings with animal raising, a working-class luxury that would be outlawed in most North American cities by the 1880s. In addition, as Charles Durand has written in his Reminiscences, the fertile soil in the area that became Corktown and its warm, humid environment combined to make the growing of fruit trees possible.⁶⁸ This facility may well have been utilised by Corktown's residents, either in their own yards or by pilfering the fruit from wild trees and the orchards of local farmers. Fruit and vegetable gardening comprised another aspect of extra-market economic strategy which was complementary to Irish culture.

Livestock raising and vegetable gardening, in essence, combined to foster a third element of the extra-market economy used by working-class families in the nineteenth-century. Petty grocers and hucksters sold the food, milk and alcoholic drink that they grew and made in their own homes or purchased at the local market. Such a system of extra-market grocering existed among the Catholic Irish in Hamilton in the

1830s and 40s. Irish households put up for sale the surplus milk, meat and vegetables that the other elements of their family economy had produced. As most petty grocers sold out of their own homes, this marketing had a geographic, neighbourhood-oriented character which may have served to reinforce the ethnic bonds of the Irish in Corktown.

Shortly after the incorporation of Hamilton as a town in 1833, provision was made to regulate petty grocers through licensing. All grocers required a town-issued license and that license could not be transferred to another without the Board's consent. By August, 1835, the Board realised that their ability to police grocers' operations through this method was ineffective and, in essence, they gave in to the popular trend, with one exception.

Several complaints having been made against persons keeping groceries and huckster shops without license from the Board[,] it was determined that the selling of malt liquors or strong beer - only render persons liable to take out a license from the Police. The simply selling [of] groceries does not.⁶⁹

The large number of Irish names among those licensed for grocery operations is notable in the Board minutes. Among them were a good proportion of women, licensed as proprietors in the pre-Famine era. A Mrs. Donolly was licensed for a grocery in May, 1837, for example, while Bridget Madigan bought a "huckster license" in June, 1845, for 23s.9d.⁷⁰ It was a natural outgrowth of raising animals and growing vegetables at home and, as such, was consistent culturally with Irish family economic strategies in Corktown in the 1830s and 1840s.

A final means outside of the proper wage economy which helped to supplement household income in this period concerned living

arrangements. Irish Catholic families in Hamilton before 1850 took in boarders and lodgers and "doubled up", sharing accomodation with residents outside of their immediate family. Boarding provided the family economy with an extra-market income based upon ethnic and class allegiances. As Robert Harney has noted, "...one or more families living with relatives or fellow countrymen as boarders was far more than a malleable household; it was also a complex network of informal trust, written contract, and cash exchange."⁷¹ Like the neighbourhood's vacant lots and backyards, Irish immigrants' houses themselves were used as a source of extra-market trade, and it was women who operated this exchange. In his social history of Hamilton from 1851 to 1861, Katz observed a great tendency for Irish Catholic families to take in boarders. When they did so, moreover, it was predominantly Irish and Catholic boarders that they took in.⁷² Quantitative evidence of boarding in the pre-1850 era is less abundant, but some clues do exist which point to this practice. As early as June of 1832, the Western Mercury reported that "[s]uch is the crowded state of the town, that beds cannot be obtained by all who want them, and every sort of shake-down has been put in requisition."⁷³ The physical shortage of houses in Corktown and Hamilton in the early 1830s no doubt militated against a large degree of private boarding. At this time, boarding was more common in the town's inns and hotels.⁷⁴

Because of this shortage, doubling up was a more common practice in the earlier period. House-sharing involved a number of arrangements including owners of a house subletting certain rooms to other families and landlords subdividing houses themselves and renting halves to

different families. Appeals to the Board of Police for unfair tax assessment in Hamilton in the 1830s and 40s particularly bear out these living arrangements. For example, in July, 1846, "John Montgomery and Dennis OCallahan, assessed for two houses", appealed to the Board because their families inhabited only one. More often, however, extended families doubled up, attesting not only the importance of kin in Irish culture but also the process of chain migration. In one case, a tenant in the Fourth Ward, Mary Campbell, subdivided her own rental space to make room for her family. Originally, "she [had] rented it upon the interest of keeping herself and two Children," the Board minutes for May 29, 1843 read, but "since then she has taken in her Father and Mother and three sisters..."⁷⁵ Doubling up and to some extent boarding, then, were important as elements of a family economic strategy, in making the best use of limited household space to facilitate kin and community members. That it complemented Irish cultural feeling made it all the more relevant to the Irish in Corktown before 1847.

The economic bases of Corktown's Irish from 1832 to 1847, therefore, give insight into broader cultural and behavioural patterns of emigrants in early nineteenth-century Upper Canada. Hamilton's pre-Famine Irish organised themselves by family economic strategies, employing both cultural preferences and a rural heritage in this behaviour. Each family member played a specific role in the operation of the family economy. Men, older sons and unmarried daughters worked in the town's wage economy, while most women and children ran extra-

market activities. It was this division of labour that made survival in one locale more viable through the volatile Upper Canadian economy of the 1830s and 40s. Irish economic behaviour constitutes an integral part of their presence in North America throughout the nineteenth-century. Yet, beyond this, the Catholic Irish in the New World established a cultural presence which remains even today an important element in popular identity. At the outset, the Irish Catholic cultural identity was defensive and insular, seeking to protect and assist in the transition of Erin's emigrants in North America. Their cultural institutions embodied this sentiment. Irish Catholic "fellow feeling" was an important historical force and it is to this process which this discussion now turns.

Endnotes

¹See Thistlethwaite, "Migration From Europe Overseas", and MacDonald and MacDonald, "Chain Migration, Ethnic Neighborhood Formation, and Social Networks".

²Bruno Ramirez, "Montreal's Italians and the Socioeconomy of Settlement, 1900-1930: Some Historical Hypotheses" Urban History Review 1 (June, 1981), p.39.

³See Ellen Horgan Biddle, "The American Catholic Irish Family," in Charles H. Mindel and Robert W. Habenstein (eds.) Ethnic Families in America: Patterns and Variations (New York, 1981), pp.86-114.

⁴See Mannion, Irish Settlements, p.35.

⁵See Kennedy, The Irish.

⁶Ibid., p.51.

⁷See Ibid., p.52. Kennedy writes; "Women and children did not eat their meals until after the men and older boys had had their fill, a practice which systematically made the more nutritious food and larger helpings available to the favoured sex."

⁸Biddle, "The American Catholic Irish Family", p.92.

⁹Ibid., p.91.

¹⁰Kennedy, The Irish, p.73.

¹¹See Richard L. Bushman, "Family Security in the Transition from Farm to City, 1750-1850," Journal of Family History 6 (Fall, 1981).

¹²Public Archives of Canada. Provincial Secretary's Correspondence. As quoted in H.C. Pentland, "The Lachine Strike of 1843," Canadian Historical Review 24 (1943), p.276.

¹³Western Mercury, 9 January 1834, p.3, col.6., and Hamilton Board of Police Minutes, 26 January 1845.

¹⁴See Peter A. Russell, "Wage Labour Rates in Upper Canada in the 1830s," Histoire Sociale 14 (1981), pp.339-68, and Judith Fingard, "The Winter's Tale: The Seasonal Contours of Pre-Industrial Poverty in British North America, 1815-1860," CHA Historical Papers (1974), pp.65-94.

¹⁵Bettina Bradbury, "Pigs, Cows and Boarders: Non-Wage Forms of Survival Among Montreal Families, 1861-1891," Labour/ Le Travail 14 (Fall, 1984), p.12.

¹⁶See Pentland, "The Development", Teeple, "Land, Labour, and Capital", and Leo Johnson, "Land Policy, Population Growth and Social Structure in the Home District, 1793-1851," Ontario History 63 (1971), pp.41-60.

¹⁷These artisanal pursuits are well documented in advertisements in the town's early newspapers. The Western Mercury, 1831-1834, is the best example.

¹⁸Doucet and Weaver, "Town Fathers", p.84.

¹⁹See Katz, The People of Hamilton, especially pp.44-175

²⁰This pattern has been documented in other eastern North American cities. See, for example, Stephan Thernstrom, Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City (Cambridge, Mass., 1964) and Brian C. Mitchell, The Paddy Camps: The Irish of Lowell, 1821-61 (Urbana and Chicago, 1988).

²¹See Chapter 4.

²²See Western Mercury, 3 May 1832, p.3, col.2 and Ibid., 7 June 1832, p.2, col.4.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., 13 February 1834, p.3, col.4.

²⁵See, respectively, Hamilton Gazette, 10 November 1845, p.4, col.5; The Hamilton Spectator and Journal of Commerce, 19 December 1846; and Commercial Advertiser, 13 July 1847. HPLSC.

²⁶Pentland, "The Development", p.460.

²⁷O'Neil, "Chronicles of Corktown", p.30.

²⁸The growth of a service sector in Port Hamilton is evident in the early 1840s, as the amount of hotel and tavern newspaper advertising at this time attests. One example of this pattern is an advertisement sponsored by an Irishman, Dennis Nelligan, for the "BURLINGTON HOTEL - At Port Hamilton," where "the best of Liquors, good Stabling... and civil treatment, [was] always in reserve for the patrons of this Establishment". See, HPLSC, The Bee (Hamilton), 1 January 1845, p.8, col.2.

²⁹For advertisements for farm labour see Western Mercury, 1 August 1833, p.2, col.5. For advertisements for canal maintenance labour see Ibid., 28 June 1832, p.4, col.2.

³⁰Hamilton Board of Police Minutes, 14 May 1838.

³¹Ibid., 8 February 1836.

³²See Russell, "Wage Labour Rates", p.70.

³³Information on OKeef was drawn from Hamilton Board of Police Minutes, 1837 to 1845; Hamilton Board of Police Accounts Journal, September to December 1840; and Town of Hamilton Census-Assessment 1839; all at HPLSC. Information on Cronan was drawn from Hamilton Board of Police Minutes, 1839 to 1846; and Town of Hamilton Census-Assessment 1839.

³⁴MacDonell Papers, MacDonald to Gaulin, 9 March 1841.

³⁵Political patronage positions also offered some Irish Catholics paid employment at public expense. Dennis Malone served as Hamilton's gaoler throughout this period after Benjamin Tydd, another Irishman, died of cholera in 1832, leaving the position vacant. John Kennedy was appointed clerk of the John Street market in 1834 and held that position for some time. Michael Hogan was the town's poundkeeper from 1837 until the end of the pre-Famine era. Timothy Steele and Patrick Duffy were bailiffs in 1837 and 1838; and Henry McSherry (1838-39) and John Brick (1843) were Collectors. These appointments were salaried and, as such, supplied their inhabitants with a little more security than seasonal work offered. Ultimately, however, their fortunes in these positions rested with the success of the Board member who promoted them. Aside from a limited amount of prestige, these jobs in this sense were not far removed from itinerant labour.

The cause of Irish affinity for public works is difficult to establish, but it may have had its roots in the Old World. In depressed agricultural areas, farmers and farm labourers were employed by the government on road construction to alleviate their economic straits. For example, see Elliott. Irish Migrants, p.57.

³⁶Western Mercury, 25 October 1832, p.2, col.6, and Ibid., 3 July 1834, p.3, col.4.

³⁷The Mirror, 28 September 1838.

³⁸Western Mercury, 19 January 1832.

³⁹Ibid., 31 January 1833, p.2, col.6.

⁴⁰Russell, "Wage Labour Rates", pp.74-76.

⁴¹See Hasia R. Diner, Erin's Daughter's in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century (Baltimore, 1983). Especially Chapter 4.

⁴²Susanna Moodie, Roughing It In The Bush; or Forest Life in Canada (Toronto, 1962 [reprint]), p.141.

⁴³Diner, Erin's Daughters, p.91.

→ ⁴⁴Katz, The People of Hamilton, pp.209-308.

⁴⁵MacDonell Papers, Cassidy to MacDonell, December 1833.

⁴⁶McQueston and two Americans, Joseph Janes and John Fisher, were partners in an early iron foundry. The manufactory produced plows, threshing machines, stoves, and pumps. Weaver, Hamilton, pp.26-27.

⁴⁷See Town of Hamilton Census-Assessment 1839, HPLSC. I have used Katz's figures for the average ages of female domestic servants in nineteenth-century North American cities. See Katz, The People of Hamilton, pp.287-90.

⁴⁸Lois C. Evans, Hamilton: The Story of a City (Toronto, 1970), p.108.

⁴⁹MacGill, My Mother, The Judge, p.33.

⁵⁰Russell, "Wage Labour Rates", p.72.

⁵¹This theme has received a great deal of treatment in social history in recent years, particularly within the historiography of the "new urban history". See particularly, Thernstrom, Poverty and Progress, Katz, The People of Hamilton, and Clyde Griffen and Sally Griffen, Natives and Newcomers: The Ordering of Opportunity in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Poughkeepsie (Cambridge, Mass., 1978).

⁵²The Mirror, 4 August 1838, p.3, col.2.

⁵³MacDonell Papers, Cassidy to MacDonell, 3 August 1836.

⁵⁴Diner, Erin's Daughters, p.13.

⁵⁵PAO. The Liberal, 3 July 1844, p.3, col.3.

⁵⁶Commercial Advertiser, 10 July 1846.

⁵⁷The Mirror, 30 September 1837, p.3, col.3.

⁵⁸See Biddle, "The American Catholic Irish Family", Kennedy, The Irish, and Diner, Erin's Daughters.

⁵⁹Hamilton Board of Police Minutes, 24 August 1840 and Ibid., 22 January 1845.

⁶⁰Western Mercury, 3 May 1832, p.3, col.2.

⁶¹Hamilton Board of Police Minutes, 23 July 1838.

→⁶²Bushman, "Family Security", p.247.

⁶³See Bradbury, "Pigs, Cows, and Boarders", p.19.

⁶⁴Hamilton Board of Police Minutes, 23 February 1846; and Ibid., 21 September 1846.

⁶⁵See Hamilton Board of Police Minutes, 1837-1847.

⁶⁶Bradbury, "Pigs, Cows, and Boarders", p.22.

⁶⁷Town of Hamilton Census-Assessment 1839. See assessments for the years 1835 to 1847 as well.

⁶⁸Durand, Reminiscences.

⁶⁹Hamilton Board of Police Minutes, 25 August 1835.

→⁷⁰Ibid., 15 May 1837, and Ibid., 9 June 1845. In addition, it is likely that many of those groceries whose licenses were taken out in the names of Irish men were actually operated by their wives at home.

⁷¹Robert F. Harney, "Boarding and Belonging: Thoughts on Sojourner Institutions," Urban History Review 2 (1978), p.13.

⁷²Katz, The People of Hamilton, p.37.

⁷³Western Mercury, 7 June 1832, p.2, cols.3,4.

→⁷⁴Again, the large amount of newspaper advertisements for boarding and lodging at early Hamilton inns attests this fact. See, for example, Western Mercury, 1831-1834.

⁷⁵Hamilton Board of Police Minutes, 14 July 1846, and Ibid., 29 May 1843.

Chapter 4: Corktown:1830-1847 - The Cognitive Dimensions of
An Immigrant Community

When an immigrant is transplanted from one country to another, he has to reconstruct his interpersonal "field". He will rebuild in a new community a network of personal affiliations. Such a reconstruction is accomplished through his activities to satisfy his immediate needs... To satisfy these needs, he will use a certain institutional setup...¹

A tendency of immigrants in the New World, upon their arrival, was to attempt to recreate the social relations of the Old World in North America. Various institutions that played intimate roles in the lives of migrants before emigration were "transplanted" in the cultural baggage of ethnic groups overseas. New ones, designed to equip migrants with the means to cope with social and economic hostility in North America, were invented. From religion to associational life, ethnic organizations acted both as symbolic manifestations of a familiar culture in a new setting, as well as arenas in which ethnic discourse took place. It was here, in the mutual aid societies, parish organizations, and ethnic newspapers that immigrants organized their lives and negotiated their ethnicity in the New World. These cultural "nodal points" maintained ethnic relevance for the community. While the church and cultural associations were most visible in their ethnic content, the cultural discourse of saloons, the market, and the

boardinghouse was just as important in determining how immigrants viewed themselves.

The more an immigrant group's institutional structures addressed the needs of immigrants to belong to a cultural whole, the more cohesive a community could become. This was true whether one resided within or outside of the community's physical space. The cognitive dimensions of an immigrant colony, then, can be measured to some extent by the group's "institutional completeness". Early Hamilton's Irish, by 1847, had developed a wide range of institutions which served the community's social, economic, and above all, cultural needs. These institutions in themselves composed the cognitive boundaries of the group. Just as Corktown's spatial boundaries were physically distinct, so were its cognitive boundaries culturally distinct. They identified for Corktown's residents what "Irishness" meant in Hamilton in the 1830s and 1840s. Moreover, this institutional completeness had a geographic element as well. In The Image of the City, Kevin Lynch argues that in order to come to terms with the confusion of the urban world a citizen develops his own mental maps of what he considers to be the important locations or "nodal points" in the city. "Environmental images are a result of a two-way process between the observer and his environment. The environment suggests distinctions and relations, and the observer - with great adaptability and in light of his own purposes - selects, organizes, and endows with meaning what he sees."² For the immigrant, ethnic institutions were the "nodal points" in the New World which provided cultural meaning. The geographic configuration of these nodes provided the immigrant with a cognitive map of the city. The church,

the tavern, the market, the workplace, the boardinghouse and the home retained a dual purpose in the immigrants' minds. They were both places of functional frequency and of ethnic salience. In Hamilton, St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, John Bradley's "British Hotel" tavern, the John Street Market and Irish merchants in and around Corktown, the James Street wharves and the town streets, as places of employment, played this role. The Irish in Corktown from 1832 to 1847 used these institutions to form a cultural foundation which would serve to assist the Famine newcomers who came in great numbers at the end of this era. In effect, they were inward-looking in their purpose to serve the needs of a small Catholic community within the larger town. At the same time, however, they also cloaked the "otherness" of Irish Catholics in the 1830s and 40s to an extent that was not possible after the Famine migrations.

Perhaps the prime formal institution in North America's ethnic neighbourhoods was the church. Regardless of the "religiosity" of the immigrant community, the church was invariably a centre of moral and social support, as well as a link with the Old World. In many cases, it was the first institution that was organized by immigrants after arriving in North America.

There has been an abundance of literature recently on the role of the Catholic church in immigrant life in the New World.³ In English Canada and in the United States during the early nineteenth-century, being Catholic was practically synonymous with being a newcomer. More particularly, until the large-scale arrival of German immigrants in the 1850s and 60s, being Catholic almost always meant being Irish. The

Roman Catholic Church in urban America in the 1830s and 40s had an unmistakable Irish flavour to it, in the character of both clergy and laity.

"For the Irish, Catholicism had become the great fortress of national preservation in Ireland."⁴ Similarly, Roman Catholicism in the New World became for the Irish immigrant a fortress to preserve his cultural heritage. The Irish-Catholic parish in North America was a regenerative "nodal point". When parishoners went to church, they not only received spiritual guidance for their daily lives, but invariably received a dose of national identity and national pride as well. "As an ethnic institution [the church] also aimed at preserving a national heritage which was in danger of being lost in a new environment. It strengthened the cohesion of the group and was another barrier separating Catholics from surrounding society."⁵

The peculiarly Irish brand of Roman Catholicism which Irish migrants brought with them to North America before 1850 was Tridentine Catholicism. Its piety was centred in the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, and receiving communion and confession annually. Its principal constituency was the local parish. Conversely, the parish church reflected that community's size, wealth, and strength relative to other actors in the urban setting. The clinging of parishoners to the church in the New World did not, however, signify any great degree of "religiosity" or widespread knowledge of the tenets of Catholicism. "...[T]he Irish in Ireland prior to 1850 were not a very Roman Catholic people. Rather, they were Irish Catholic according to their own folk religion traditions."⁶ They transplanted this religious nominalism

wherever they went in North America. Communion and confession were practiced side by side with the wake.

The character of the local clergy, moreover, had a profound impact on the shape of the ethnic parish. Irish laity brought with them a long tradition of clerical dominance combined, oddly, with a strong personal affection for the clergy. A shortage of priests characterised the early Catholic Church in North America. Many were uninvited, some having left Europe after having protracted disputes with their bishops at home. Compatibility with local laity, it seems, was the primary consideration in dispatching missionaries to Catholic populations in the frontier areas of the New World. In Hamilton, compatibility meant ethnicity. Corktown's pre-Famine Irish were religiously served by a Cassidy, a Connolly, two O'Reillys, a MacDonald and a McIntosh.⁷

The earliest evidence of a Catholic parish in Hamilton comes from a letter written by Alexander MacDonell in 1827. It notes that a chapel was "...under roof, but unfinished inside".⁸ The location of this chapel is not determinable by remaining evidence, but the presence of such a structure hints that a significant Catholic population was in existence even at this early date. It may be that the public works' labourers composed this first congregation. Curiously, in a list of Catholic congregations in western Canada made by Bishop MacDonell in 1832, there is no mention of a parish in Hamilton.⁹ It is likely that the transiency of much of the Catholic population lent an impression of impermanence to the early church there. This fluidity seemed to have lasted throughout the first five years of the decade. In a March 10, 1835 letter to Bishop MacDonell, Reverend John Cassidy remarked, "[t]he

disadvantages of a thin population and poor Catholics should not be winked at...".¹⁰ That a rudimentary religious structure existed at all is signal of the perseverance of a small and impoverished congregation, the large part of whose numbers and identity in these years were rapidly changing.

Cassidy was the missionary for the Dundas circuit, travelling between Hamilton, Guelph and Dundas, his home base. His letters to the Bishop characterise him as a tireless complainer - about his Government stipend, his arduous mission, his fellow clergy, and about the lack of wealth in his flock. He wrote in August of 1836; "As to myself everything around me within and without doth convince me that I have reached a period of life in which it reasonable for me to expect the setting of the sun; I am worn out with the travail of my missions: I am absolutely done with the roads between Guelph and Dundas..."¹¹ It seems that Cassidy was not alone in regarding a priest's life in the New World as harsh and gloomy. He remarked to Vicar-General Gaulin in March of 1836 that "...[t]here ought to be some encouragement to keep the priests from going home to Ireland as they already have done..."¹² When Cassidy commenced his mission in Hamilton is unknown. He served the laity of Corktown until 1838, however, and despite his chronic complaining, was undeniably the catalyst in the formation of a Catholic community in early Hamilton, and the establishment of the first parish of St. Mary's.

The Western Mercury of 23 January 1834 announced:

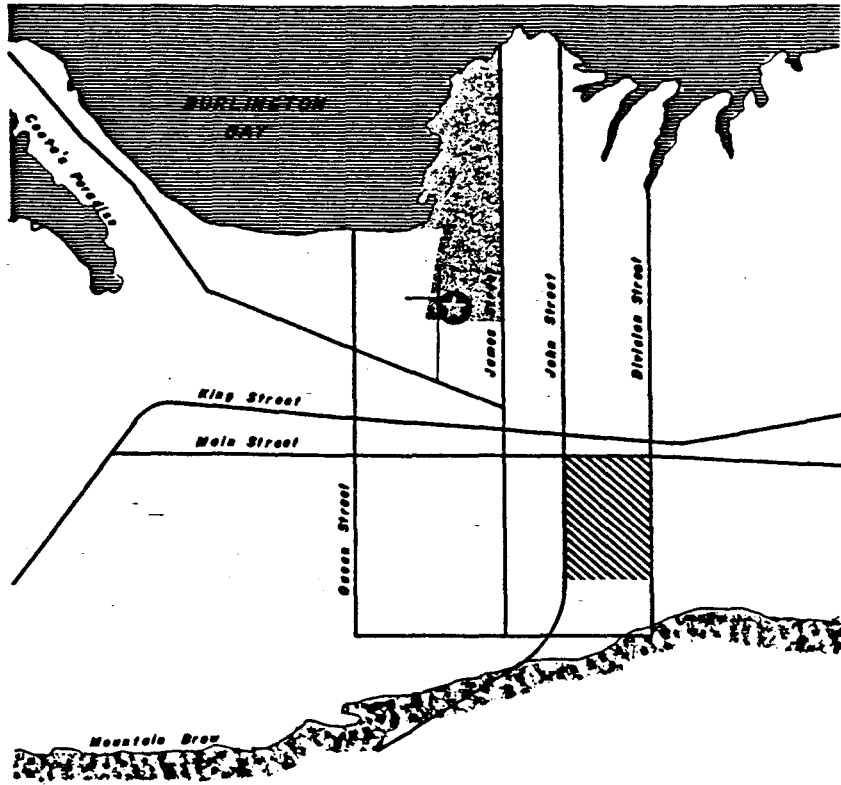
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH. A public meeting will be held at Mr. John Bradley's tavern in this town, on the 1st day of February next at 3 o'clock, P.M., to




ascertain what amount has been subscribed for the erection of a Catholic Church in this town, and to take such steps as may be deemed necessary for procuring further donations, &c...¹³

Not surprisingly, the Irish Catholic community met at another ethnic institution, the Irish-owned saloon, to procure funds for erecting a church. By 21 April, 1834, "[s]ubscriptions to a considerable amount..."¹⁴ had been obtained, although a site had not then been identified. By the summer of the same year, the organisation of subscriptions had nearly reached its goal. A meeting was called, again at Bradley's tavern, "...to adopt measures for the erection of a Roman Catholic Church".¹⁵ Ironically, the date of this proposed meeting was July 12, 1834.

The site which was finally selected for the construction of St. Mary's was, curiously enough, outside of the geographic area of Corktown, located on the corner of Park and Sheaffe Streets, in the Second Ward, on Allan MacNab's tract of land (see Map 3). Despite his strong Anglican convictions, Sir Allan and Bishop MacDonell were friends and political allies against William Lyon Mackenzie's Reformers. The fact that Lady MacNab was a devout Catholic reinforced the strength of this relationship. Their acquaintance is evidenced in one of MacDonell's numerous letters to Vicar-General William Peter MacDonald at Hamilton. The Bishop writes in 1839: "I...was happy to learn from Sir Allan McNab that you were getting on famously with the Church in Hamilton you had the honour of laying the foundation stone of it..."¹⁶ MacDonald, moreover, a close friend of the Bishop's, was also acquainted with the Hamilton M.P. His visits to Dundurn to see Lady MacNab, as

MAP 3 : St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, 1838-1847.



-  Allan MacNab's Land
-  St. Mary's Church
-  Corktown

well as those on occasion of MacDonell and later, Bishop Power, are noted in The Diary of Sophia MacNab, Sir Allan's daughter.¹⁷ In referring to the wealth of his parishoners in a return letter to MacDonell in 1839, the Vicar-General comments; "The smallest mite of support for Priest or Presbytery has never been advanced by our McNab's".¹⁸ It is likely, however, that a parcel of land was granted the Church by Sir Allan, perhaps as a favour to the Bishop for his political congruity. Given the limited financial resources of the Catholic laity in this era, proximity to the community would have been foregone for financial assistance in establishing a national parish.

In 1869, St. Mary's had not been altered to any great extent from its pre-Famine form. The Hamilton City Directory for that year describes the Church as,

a handsome brick building, in the Gothic style of architecture. The church is cruciform in shape, with handsome nave, transept, and galleries ...Within the space allotted to the High Altar, and over the handsome canopy made of wood, but so coloured, as to have the appearance of white marble...¹⁹

Despite its location, St. Mary's was the spiritual centre of Corktown's Irish community.

Between the first real push for a Catholic church in Hamilton in 1834 and its completion in 1837, the parish waited for funds and manpower. As noted above, 1835 and 1836 were years when many Irish Catholics went elsewhere for work to supply their families with a livelihood. Consequently, as population decreased, so too did further construction on St. Mary's. In March of 1836, Cassidy wrote that, "[t]he

new Church in Hamilton is not progressing, it is but a base frame. The Church in Dundas is in debt. The Catholics are poor - there is no stir with workmen, little support for a priest..."²⁰ Furthermore, when times took a turn for the better for St. Mary's, new problems arose. Construction resumed in late summer 1836, only to be halted shortly thereafter. The parish wardens contracted two fellow Catholics from Dundas, Edward and Daniel Henly, both carpenters who had built the Presbyterian Church in Hamilton several months earlier to construct the church. In dealing with those of their own religious persuasion, however, the Henlys displayed a different ethic. As Cassidy reported to MacDonell;

The man who set the people of Hamilton on the start for building a Catholic Church has I may say duped us all. Altho a carpenter and having lately built a fine Scotch Church, he refused to build ours, or to take any responsibility: but he should recommend another carpenter and thus procured him the work, the consequence was that the latter abandoned the work, pocketted \$20 of the Catholics money and ran off to the States. The conduct of this ring leader (Henly) provoked severals. We are all sorry to see the Church as it is, not knowing how long it may remain so, it were better it had not been commenced.²¹

Having experienced this final setback, Hamilton's Catholics set out again to complete the parish Church. By October of 1837, Reverend M. Burke, another area missionary, wrote to MacDonell on this subject. It is significant that Burke notes the participation of Protestant help in the completion of the church construction, in effect signalling the comfortable relationship between the two communions in the early town. He wrote:

I have at length succeeded in enclosing our Church in Hamilton...[T]his I accomplished mainly with the help of our separated Brothers who all came forward with the greatest alacrity a work unrivold [sic] in U. Canada for expedition and accomplished with the trifling expense of about eighteen dollars to the Catholics...²²

1837 marked the completion of the building of St. Mary's. It also witnessed the end of John Cassidy's mission in Hamilton and the Dundas circuit. In December of 1837 he was "...almost sunk into despondency at the ingratitude and the general depravity of the world around me...".²³ Cassidy was transferred to the mission of St Catharines there to spread his charm and cheery outlook to a new group of parishoners.

William Peter MacDonald first appeared in Hamilton on November 9, 1838. He was a Scot, born 25 March, 1771, at Eberlow, Banffshire, who emigrated to the Canadas in 1826 and two years later was made Vicar-General of the Diocese of Kingston by his close friend and associate Alexander MacDonell. While in Kingston, he purchased a religious journal from Thomas Dalton entitled The Catholic, editing and operating it from 1830 until 1831 when he ran out of funds, and later continuing its publication from Hamilton in 1841.²⁴ MacDonald was at times an obstinate and difficult man. "W[illia]m Peter quarrelled so violently with his curates that finally Easbuig Mhor [Bishop MacDonell] let him choose his own deputies, certainly a great concession."²⁵ MacDonald was appointed to Hamilton and St. Mary's as its first resident priest. As Vicar-General, MacDonald assumed an ecclesiastical responsibility for the missions of the area, and soon made his presence felt. He presided over an era of marked growth and community

solidification of Hamilton's Catholics in the 1840s. During this period of increasing immigration to Canada West and Hamilton, the Vicar-General was instrumental in aiding Irish adjustment to the New World environment. MacDonald "...came to have a tender regard for the Irish who formed the bulk of his flock. He never wearied of assisting immigrants to adjust themselves to their new type of life".²⁶

As noted earlier, while the population of Hamilton decreased in 1838 and 1839, the Roman Catholic proportion increased, and though poor in resources, the Catholic community made great strides in religious life in these years. "The congregation is much more numerous than I could have believed," MacDonald reported in December of 1838; but it was also poor. "They do not have any thing more to contribute nor subscribe for my support; and I would not want to press them to this effect, as we have just completed the Church."²⁷ By October of the following year, the Church had been finished, land was secured for a church yard and four lots had been procured for a clergyman's dwelling on "...a new and most delightful Situation near the Church, the largest and best built Stone Cottage in Hamilton...just roofing in".²⁸ The exertions of the Irish laity in this regard did not go unnoticed. MacDonald wrote, "[t]he people here,...,[are] willing to do the utmost for the accomodation of their Clergy".²⁹ It is apparent that Hamilton's pre-Famine Catholic Irish were building an institution which they could lay claim to both as Catholics and Irishmen. It was a manifestation of their culture.

From the inception of St. Mary's in 1838, the parish's financial obligations were handled by a committee of five Church Wardens. These

Catholics were almost all Irish, middle-class, and had generally persisted in Hamilton for some time. In 1841, they were Henry Duffy, Dennis Malone, John Curran, Daniel Tewksberry, and Reverend Angus MacDonell (curate). MacDonald refers to them on several occasions in his correspondence to Gaulin.

The return from the pew-rents, the collections [offertory], and other blessings, I leave them in the hands of our Church Wardens, to defray the debts incurred by the Church buildings, the Presbytery, and by the purchase of the land belonging to it.³⁰

This evidence provides some insight into the hierarchical structure of Hamilton's Irish Catholic community in the 1840s. The presence of church wardens, pew-renters and a distinct contrast between the relative luxury of the priest's residence and the squalid housing conditions of Corktown indicate a degree of class differentiation within the group. A small but significant Catholic middle-class was at this time in its infancy. Individuals such as Tewksberry, a provisions merchant, John Kennedy, a grocer, Terence Branigan, a tavern keeper, Patrick McCluskey, a hotel proprietor, Samuel McCurdy, a tailor, John O'Grady, a baker, and John McArdle, a blacksmith and carriage-maker were the first of the Catholic Irish to make inroads into Hamilton's mercantile class.³¹ Like the Catholic businessmen of Newburyport, Massachusetts, Hamilton's middle-class Catholic Irish performed an important role in the early town. Through their control of respected positions within the parish body, they served as cultural, social and economic examples to the remainder of the congregation. Though small in numbers, "...successful men such as these acted both as models for their ethnic group, and as

mediators between it and the larger community."³²

Yet the Church relied on the resources of the whole group for its continued viability. William Peter MacDonald was not a "brick-and-mortar" clergyman. "The Deed [for the Church lands]," he writes, "is in my Name; but I have left it in the hands of our Sheriff, to be transferred in a safe and legal manner...for the Catholic Congregation of Hamilton".³³ Hamilton's Catholic Irish in the 1840s exerted themselves to see that their church and clergymen were much better off than themselves. By constructing a firm foundation of Catholicism in the New World, they were assuring themselves of a lasting institution that would serve as both a spiritual and ethnic regenerator.

The final act in the creation of this Irish Catholic parish was the replacement of MacDonald, the aging Highlander, with an Irish Catholic priest. The Vicar-General had always been outspoken and stubborn. MacDonald's friendship with Alexander MacDonell during his tenure as Bishop had allowed him relative freedom, however, to say and do as he wished. Bishop MacDonell died on 14 January 1840, and it was MacDonald who was chosen to give the funeral oration at Glengarry. With the death of MacDonell, the tolerance that had been shown the Vicar-General soon disappeared. Michael Power was appointed the first Bishop of the Diocese of Toronto on 17 December 1841. Power was a confident man who had been priest to a large parish of Irish Catholics in Beauharnois, near Montreal, where canal construction was underway. His organizing tactics soon came into conflict with MacDonald's notions about his role as Vicar-General in the Hamilton region. Irish missionaries who had followed the orders of the Vicar-General when he

enjoyed MacDonell's patronage now saw Power's appearance as their opportunity to express their displeasure at MacDonald's "fiefdom". Early in 1844, Power assured Reverend P. Connolly of Dundas that he had "...nothing to fear from the violence of the Very Rev'd Vicar General...You need not be uneasy. You are under my protection and I shall see every thing done as it ought to be: but you must act with calmness and self-possession and know how to bear, for a while, with the weakness and infirmities of a Venerable old man.³⁴ In the following month, this jurisdictional dispute was laid to rest when Bishop Power issued an exeat to MacDonald commanding him to "...continue to enjoy the honorary title, rank and precedence of Vicar General in the Diocese, but without any jurisdiction in that capacity".³⁵ Effectively reduced to the role of parish priest, MacDonald eventually was joined at St. Mary's by Reverend Edward Gordon and Reverend Terence O'Reilly in 1846. Both Gordon and O'Reilly were Irishmen. "As Gordon spoke Gaelic, he proved to be the very man the Bishop needed to shepherd his fellow countrymen flocking to the new settlements."³⁶ Gordon assumed the Vicar-Generalship of the Hamilton area in December 1846. MacDonald returned to Toronto and was named the first Dean of the Diocese of Toronto. He died on April 2, 1847.

The birth and maturation of St. Mary's Church, Hamilton, occurred during the pre-Famine period, 1838-1846. Hamilton's Catholics witnessed two eras of community formation and religious organization. The Cassidy and MacDonald periods were seminal in the growth of an Irish Catholic identity. With the appointment of Gordon, St. Mary's entered a new era which would begin with a floodtide of Famine emigrants entering

the city. By 1851, 3,015 or 31.3 per cent of Hamilton's population were Catholic; 3,417 or 35.4 per cent were born in Ireland.³⁷ As measured by the growth of St. Mary's Parish, Hamilton's Irish community, by the end of the pre-Famine era, had become an established cultural entity rooted in Catholicism. The groundwork that had been laid between 1832 and 1846 prepared the community to receive and assimilate their dispossessed countrymen after 1847.

"The stereotype of the Irishman is a humourous and boisterous drunk, and the Irishman appears to have this image both at home and abroad."³⁸ Part of the culture that was transplanted to the New World in pre-Famine migrations was the Irishman's propensity for drink. Drinking, both in Ireland and in North America, appeared to represent an integral element in the social and economic life of Irish culture. "From the womb to the tomb," Joyce O'Connor writes, the Irish celebrated christenings, weddings and funerals with the rites of alcoholic consumption.³⁹ The institution which embodied this culture in the New World was the Irish working-class saloon.

The social function of the working-class saloon in history has only recently been addressed in labour history literature.⁴⁰ The barroom offered a place of solace and an arena for dialogue for men who shared common work experiences and lifestyles. It became, in many ways, the "poor man's social club", mirroring the character of the neighbourhood in which it was situated. It reinforced an ethnic and class-based identity among those who frequented it. For the Irish in

North America, the local saloon was a physical manifestation of Irish culture. It was their "semi-public" space of gathering, both formally, for example to organize a parish, a political campaign, or a mutual benefit association, and informally, perhaps just to discuss daily events over a drink. Immigrant Irish, like other ethnic groups, drank at private homes and "blind pigs" (unlicensed barrooms) to be sure. However, the transplantation of the Irish tavern established it as one of the most stable institutions in the neighbourhood. As a boardinghouse and, for many, a permanent mailing address, the immigrant saloon was both physically and cognitively a cultural node, a dimension of social space that was "...as essential as churches to the life of many neighborhoods. Ethnic groups used the public spaces of the city in different ways, just as the saloons of each nationality had unique features."⁴¹

For Corktown's Irish of the 1830s and 40s, there is evidence of such a community reference point. John Bradley's "British Hotel" tavern on Upper John Street near the Court House Square (See Map 4) served Irish labourers in this capacity. Bradley was born in Dublin in 1805 and remained a bachelor until 1854. He had emigrated from Ireland to the United States in 1830, about the same time as many of Corktown's residents.⁴² Bradley appeared in the Hamilton area shortly thereafter, according to The Western Mercury of 27 October 1831 :

UNION MILLS, ANCASTER. The subscriber begs to inform the public that he has given his Mill a thorough repair, and will always keep on hand Flour of every description,...He will also send a regular supply to H. Bradley, who has opened a Flour and Provision Store, in Hamilton, in the house formerly occupied by Mr Joseph Rolston.

JOHN BRADLEY.⁴³

There is no concrete evidence to suggest that H. Bradley was related to John although it seems likely, as in November of 1832, John Bradley established the British Hotel in Hamilton across the street from the Rolston house. Another advertisement in The Western Mercury informed,

the Inhabitants of the town of Hamilton, the district of Gore, and travellers generally, that he ha[d] opened a Tavern & Provision Store, in Mountain [John] Street, opposite Bailey's Grocery, on the corner of the Court House Square, where he keeps a regular supply of every article in both departments at the lowest prices... and will pay cash on delivery for Butter, & all descriptions of Produce wanted for his Provision Store and Tavern.

JOHN BRADLEY

Hamilton, October 31, 1832⁴⁴

The British Hotel was located on the edge of Corktown, and Bradley's saloon soon became a second home to many of his fellow Irish Catholics. The building had "...good beds, stabling for horses, and everything necessary for the comfort and accomodation of his guests,...".⁴⁵ The upper part of the building served as a boardinghouse for migrant labourers. By January of 1834, Bradley had "...made a large addition to his house,... for the comfort and accomodation of boarders and all others who may favour him with a call".⁴⁶ The tavern was 65 feet long and 28 feet wide with three stories, including the basement. The building was furnished with a "Hathaway Patent Hot-Air Cooking Stove", used both "to heat the room and do the cooking".⁴⁷ The British Hotel, despite its unlikely name for an Irish Catholic haunt, provided Corktown residents with more than warmth and hot meals. The tavern gave refuge

from the often dreary conditions of home and work.

John Bradley fast became a significant figure in Hamilton's Irish Catholic community. As a publican, he was face-to-face with the community's trials and triumphs. As one of the better off members of that community, he could take steps to assist his countrymen in their times of need. The function of the saloon as an immigrant labour-exchange was one way in which nineteenth-century publicans sought to better the livelihoods of the communities which they served. "Men out of work gathered in particular saloons, often located near the jobs they wanted or once had; employers in search of labor knew where to look."⁴⁸

Moreover, when prospects for employment declined, the saloon became a source of relief for men temporarily affected. Simple meals - bread, cheese and beef - kept many from starvation. At Montreal's "Joe Beef's Canteen", the saloon-keeper "...wedged into the frame [of the bar]... a number of dollar bills and notes which served as a reserve fund" for needy workers.⁴⁹ The attraction of this brotherly help was simple. Social assistance at the saloon, unlike that at the church or civic organizations, did not mean social control. The ability of the local publican to provide sustenance in times of need established him as a key individual within the group. It also fostered a sense of community and unwritten obligation, which many saloon-keepers used, in turn, to cultivate a political constituency in ward affairs.

John Bradley's community role in pre-Famine Corktown is evident. It is of considerable significance, for example, that the British Hotel was host to the three organizational meetings in 1834 which led to the formation and construction of the parish Church of St. Mary's. It was

Bradley, also, who provided housing for several of Corktown's inhabitants. In 1839, he owned 3 lots on John Street which housed a total of 11 people. By 1842, Bradley was owner of 5 lots containing 4 houses.⁵⁰ As publican and landlord, his efforts reinforced the cohesion of the Irish Catholic community as a whole. By 1846, Bradley was looking to get out of the tavern business, advertising on February 2 of that year The Hamilton Gazette , "AN EXCELLENT HOTEL TO RENT, and Furniture for Sale -- That well known and spacious stone built Hotel, known for many years as the British Coffee House,..."⁵¹ He rented his tavern to George Roach in June of 1847, building "Bellevue", his stone house, at the top of John Street on the escarpment in 1849. The British Hotel paralleled in its existence the growth of pre-Famine Corktown. Irishmen in Corktown, as elsewhere in North America, had an affinity for drink; but it was synonymous with an affinity for communal social activity which reinforced their sense of belonging and purpose.

More informal institutions are a second range of nodal reference points in the immigrant cognitive map. Their importance rests not in the formal act of organization, but rather in more subtle, sometimes daily, behaviour. Through this behaviour, immigrants reinforced links among themselves. Public space was also an arena for ethnic discourse. The market and Irish merchant shops signified commercial ties of the urban village with the larger city. They were, in essence, the "porous boundaries" of an immigrant enclave. At the same time, Irish merchants and market vendors were ethnically inward-looking, selling goods to an

immigrant market which , as a member, they knew quite well. Their wares complemented the extra-market economies of Corktown's working-class residents: breads and booze were purchased to supplement the vegetables and meats which were raised in Corktown's backyards. The act of exchange in food between Irishmen in pre-Famine Hamilton represented a form of ethnic assertion.

Two facets of exchange existed in this regard. The first of these was the common market. In early Hamilton, the John Street market (See Map 4) was the centre of staple exchange in the Gore District. Farmers brought their produce down the mountain road to be sold at market Tuesdays and Saturdays. The Board of Police established strict market regulations to be followed by stall vendors. It was, "...ordered that no butcher's meat fish poultry butter and eggs and garden vegetables shall be exposed for Sale in the Town of Hamilton except in the Public Market Place on John Street with the exception of [T]uesdays and Saturdays when farmers and others may carry round the same for Sale...⁵² Like Bradley's tavern, the market was located on the edge of Corktown, and there can be little doubt that it equally served the needs of the Irish there. Evidence of the significance of the John Street market for Corktown's inhabitants emerges in 1837. In March of that year, a majority on the Board of Police had resolved that,

from the inconvenience arising from the present location of the Market, - being at one extremity of the town, and the difficulty of access during the wet seasons,...- it is found expedient to erect a second market in some more central location,...⁵³

The new site chosen was on James Street at York, where it currently stands. The consequence was that James Street was to replace John as the commercial focus of the Town. John Bradley was among those who appealed to the Board of Police to preserve the John Street market.

Messrs. Gage, Rolston, & Bradley made an application for an allowance to improve the market house on John Street...Moved an amendment by Mr. Jackson, seconded by Mr. T. Wilson, that £50.0/ be applied to improve the present market on John Street, and that Messrs. J. Gage, J. Rolston, and J. Bradley be a committee to expend the same.⁵⁴

The efforts of these men sustained the market for a few years after the 1837 decision; but, in the end, the James Street site became predominant. The John Street market continued in use but only for the sale of goods such as wood and hay.

The second forum of exchange for the Irish was the merchant shops in and around Corktown. These stores suited their merchandise to a specific clientele. They required a grocery license which was usually purchased for £2.10 annually from the Board of Police. These licenses, after 1835, could not be transferred to another individual without the Board's consent. They covered all establishments which sold food and provisions of any kind.

The types of wares in these Irish merchant shops is quite significant. In almost every case, their provisions included liquor of one sort or another. The explanation for this, it seems, is much wider than the Irishman's propensity for drink.

Liquor, in one form or another, played an important part in the domestic life of the slums. Many residents saw it as the only pure and wholesome drink available. The water... was often barely

potable.⁵⁵

Nor could the milk supply be entirely trusted. Milk might spoil on the way to market, and it could not keep very long. Many working-class families in the nineteenth-century consequently turned to substitutes. Beer was thought to have a nutritive value, as an old ditty implied;

When food is scarce and your larder bare,
And no rasher grease on your pan,
When hunger grows as your meals are rare
A pint of plain is your man⁵⁶

The number of Irish merchant shops selling beer and liquors in Hamilton are symbols of Irish cultural inheritance. In 1833, John Kennedy's grocery store offered "... a regular supply of Wines, Rum, Brandy, Whiskey, Strong, Spruce, and Ginger Beer,...".⁵⁷ This establishment, by 1834, had become a "WHOLESALE & RETAIL WHISKEY STORE...&c," accomodating boarders and selling whiskey by the barrel.⁵⁸ Kennedy was located at the Court House Square - corner of John and Main Streets. Michael Hogan kept a grocery in his house on John Street in 1837.⁵⁹ John Bradley's Provision Store at the British Hotel supplied a variety of liquors to be purchased for home consumption. These establishments served the specific needs of the working-class community in Corktown.

A sense that the market and grocery shops were considered community nodes of ethnic importance emerges from the town's records. Hidden behind the impression of grocery exchange as a simple economic function is a broader, more disguised form of ethnic interaction. Whether visible or implicit, the cultural importance of the market must

be considered. The market provided a common ground or gathering place for Corktown's people to meet on an ostensibly economic pretense. In the same way as the saloon drew Irishmen to meet, so too did the market become a cultural space where men and women could negotiate their ethnicity in the New World.

The ethnic institutions which most clearly manifest a group's sense of cultural cohesion are immigrant associations. Ethnic associational life in nineteenth-century North America ranged from politics to athletics. The character of these clubs differed markedly according to ethnic preferences and degrees of community closeness. Despite their varied functions, their purpose was invariably the same. "The fraternal organizations grew to succour ethnic man in those aspects of life where family, church and the host society did not."⁶⁰ Immigrant associations were fora for ethnic discussion in the New World and were places where the sentimental borders of an immigrant colony were drawn.

The preeminent immigrant associations in North America in the nineteenth-century were mutual aid societies. Their presence among immigrant populations in the New World was almost universal, and signified an infant stage in the settlement and development of an ethnic enclave. Often these societies performed socio-economic services for incoming and established members of the community including loans, insurance, credit and sickness and funeral costs. They assisted in easing the settlement of recent immigrants. Mutual aid societies, in reality, embodied what it meant to be an immigrant in North American

society. "...[I]n general terms, it gave texture and definition to ethnic identity where, initially, only migrant loneliness had existed."⁶¹ The assistance they provided was accompanied by an exclusive sentiment that recipients were insiders.

The Irish in early Hamilton were no different in this regard. Their collective socio-economic status meant that more individuals within Corktown would be in need of mutual assistance. Poverty and disease were no strangers to these people, and their collective relief efforts demonstrate their ability to cope. A St. Patrick's Society was present in Corktown at least as early as 1839 and was again visible in 1846. In the early 1840s, the association was less active, but was revived in the mid-forties as Famine emigrants began to arrive in the Town. The Hamilton Gazette of 12 February 1846 was pleased at the resuscitation of the Society.

...Let it not be so any longer, nor longer let the cry of the fatherless and the widow, or those who are ready to perish, appeal in vain to our [C]hristian sympathies. The sons of Ireland in this town and neighbourhood are well able to support such a Society...⁶²

There can be little doubt that Corktown's St. Patrick's Society was run chiefly by Irish lower middle-class merchants and artisans for their poorer countrymen. They would have been the only community members able to finance such an organization. The Society congregated annually on the 17th of March to honour their patron's commemorative day. In 1839, the new James Street market building was employed for this purpose.⁶³ Three years earlier, John Bradley's British Hotel was host to forty gentlemen on this day. "The speeches stressed harmless glee and

vivacity, harmony, unanimity, peace, and proof of a lie that Irishmen could not meet in harmony and part in peace."⁶⁴

Other less functional meetings of Irishmen held to celebrate their culture were evidenced in this era. These meetings reaffirmed and regenerated Irish culture for Corktown's residents. On September 28, 1846, "Messrs. McCurdy & Murphy ... applied for the use of the Town Hall this Evening to enable Mr. Mooney to give a Lecture on the History of Ireland."⁶⁵ Mr. Mooney's lecture apparently received good attendance and generated interest as, on the following October 12th, it was "...ordered that Mr. Mooney be allowed to lecture in the Court House without paying the usual fee".⁶⁶ Thus, functioning as a benevolent organization and a cultural unit, the St. Patrick's Society offered both service and sentiment to Corktown's pre-Famine Irish.

The Orange Order has enjoyed a much celebrated reputation in Canadian social history. As most of the pre-Famine Irish emigrants to North America were of Protestant origin, it is no surprise that this fraternal order appeared in Ontario in the 1830s and 40s. Cecil Houston and William J. Smyth write that Orangeism expanded geographically as settlement of the Ontario frontier proceeded. They were most visible where Irish Catholics were concentrated in large numbers.⁶⁷ The significance of the Orange Order to the historian of Irish Catholic settlements in North America is profound. Orangemen celebrated on the 12th of July a culture which was in direct contrast to and challenged that of Irish Catholics. In many instances, Orangemen did not fail to confront their Catholic countrymen with this point. Gregory Kealey has written of Toronto's 12th of July celebrants marching through

predominantly Catholic areas of the city. The result was, in many years, provocation. Kealey notes that Orangemen clashed with Irish Catholics 22 times in the 25 years between 1867 and 1892.⁶⁸ ^{THIS IS A LIE!!} The consequence of this provocation could be the formation of a counter-culture, of sorts, which more or less reinforced the Irish Catholic identity in North America. Orange parading regenerated the Irish Catholic "group's sense of group".

Given this background, and as noted above, it is curious that very little Orange-Green violence occurred in Corktown in the pre-Famine era. In the same year that Ogle Gowan established the Grand Lodge of British North America (1830), a Hamilton Lodge 19 was formed. No record remains as to names of its members or its activity at this early date.⁶⁹ The lack of evidence in the 1830s suggests that this Lodge was less than active in provincial affairs. By 1840, however, there seems to have been a revival of the Order in Hamilton. Minutes from the meeting of the provincial assembly in that year bear this out. The meeting was held at the "...Grand Lodge in Toronto in 1840. Col. Gowan was still Grand Master, and, reported at this meeting from counties now in Ontario West were:... H[amilton] R. O'Reilly, G[rand] M[aster] Co. Wentworth..."⁷⁰ Actual conflicts between Orangemen and Catholics in early Corktown were reportedly few. In fact, other than the thwarted parade of 1838 in Hamilton, there exists only one instance where fighting of this nature broke out. The Board of Police Minutes of July 20, 1836, reported that "[a] quarrel between Orangemen and Catholics was referred to the Board. The complaint was dismissed ... on both parties and the costs 7/9 ordered to be paid by the Town."⁷¹ It would seem that

the numbers involved in this disagreement were few, and the damage caused, minimal.

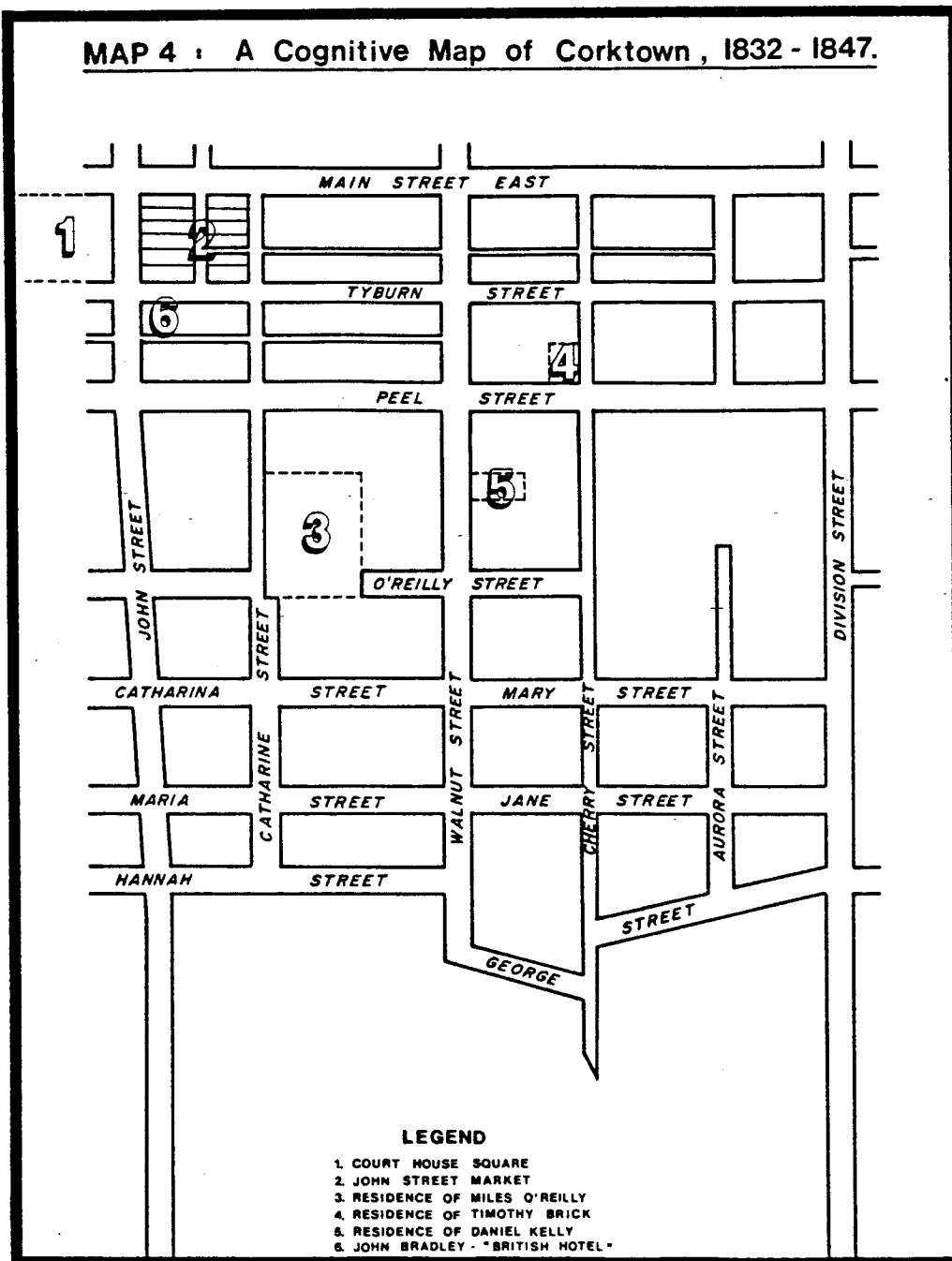
Two explanations surface regarding this lack of Orange-Green conflict, which became very heated in the Victorian period. The first, as I have delineated in Chapter One, is that no stigma was attached to being Roman Catholic and Irish in Hamilton in the pre-Famine era. This, combined with a "greater cause"- the need to unite all loyalists against Mackenzie's radicals throughout the 1830s - served to quell any large-scale sense of ill will based upon religious differences. An article in The Western Mercury of August 1, 1833 is evidence of this sentiment.

ORANGEISM.-...The inhabitants of this country, being chiefly an assemblage of people from various nations, each cherishing their own peculiar prejudices, we consider any exhibition calculated to interfere with those prejudices or create discord, both uncalled for, and imprudent, particularly as we have a rebellious faction in this country who seek to create ill-will and bad feeling, that they may in time increase their numbers, and in the end turn them against the government and institutions of the land...⁷²

In 1834, this fear was so widespread that the July 12th march in Toronto was cancelled altogether.

A second explanation is geographical. Orangemen in Hamilton did not march annually in that town because it was likely that they did so in Toronto. By the 1840s, Toronto's march had achieved a wide reputation and drew many Orangemen from the frontier areas of the province. Just as Toronto served as the arena for Upper Canadian political debate in the 1830s, so too was it the centre of Orange-Green sectarian conflict. In addressing patterns of associational life in

MAP 4 : A Cognitive Map of Corktown , 1832 - 1847.



Irish-Canadian culture, the Orange Order cannot be ignored. However, any large-scale effects of religious-based hatred and cultural division were not evident in pre-Famine Corktown.

A final area of associational life in immigrant communities concerns the political sphere. Having established themselves in the New World, immigrants sought to attain a voice in local affairs. The civic government controlled patronage and could offer employment. While some may have viewed immigrant movement into city politics as a measure of acculturation, a community-oriented aspect also existed. An Irish ward politician could expect to find in Corktown a political constituency embodied in the ethnic community. His participation in local government could help secure employment and ease the problems stemming from the economic plight of Corktown's residents.

For eight of the fourteen years that Hamilton was an incorporated Town, Ward 4 was served by an Irish Catholic Police Board member. Ward 4 politics had a distinct ethnic community focus in which political support was garnered in the grocery stores, the market, the church, the saloon, and the neighbourhood. It was bought through tenant-landlord relationships, deeds, freehold agreements, liquor, credit, and fraternal obligations. As the Irish community in Corktown developed in number, so too did its interest in local political affairs.

John Bradley was first elected as Ward 4 member by his Corktown constituents in March of 1838, and he served Corktown as member for four years (1838-1841). His victories were not without scandal. As the local community's saloon-keeper, Bradley was well-known to the Irish working-class voters in Ward 4. It is apparent that Bradley used the

institution of the saloon to foster political support. In a largely oral society, the discourse of the tavern ensured that the saloon would be the community's communication centre. Here, the publican/politician could get a grip on the affairs of the neighbourhood and the town as a whole. Moreover, it was a forum where votes could be solicited and won. "As a political headquarters, it was an ideal store, from which an ambitious proprietor could sell services along with beer and whiskey in exchange for nickels and votes."⁷³ Bradley was an obvious adherent to this method of political canvassing on a somewhat grander scale.

Following Bradley's "successful" re-election in the Fourth ward in March of 1839, a requisition was put in to the Board "signed by several voters in the fourth ward protesting against the said return".⁷⁴ They charged that "...many of the Electors had received their deeds only a short time before the Election".⁷⁵ Bradley, it seemed, was offering more than beer to willing voters in return for their support. A new election for the ward was called following a formal hearing, and Bradley was again elected to a seat on the Board. Bradley was elected again in 1840 and again the election was contested. This time the Board dismissed the complaint without having to enter into a second public consultation.

It did not take long for the tavern-keeper to learn the ropes of civic politics. Once elected, Bradley shaped decisions to the advantage of his community and, above all, himself. By 1839, the preface to the Board minutes noted that the "...meeting of the Board [was] held in Mr. John Bradley's Tavern...".⁷⁶ It seems that he was not at all concerned with the propriety of the patronage that he secured for himself. On

June 1, 1840, the authorities received "[s]everal tenders... to furnish the Board with lumber. Mr. Bradley's was accepted at 3/ 11/2... payable in debenture for 6 and 12 months".⁷⁷ Bradley also dispensed patronage. On February 16, 1841, "...[i]t was moved...by Mr. Bradley that E.W. Secord Esq. [be appointed returning officer] for the fourth ward", Bradley's own constituency.⁷⁸

Timothy Brick became Corktown's representative in 1843. Brick had apparently been schooled in Bradley's means of political canvassing for upon his election to the Ward 4 post, "...[a] protest signed by eight persons inhabitant of the 4th Ward against the return of Mr. Brick..." was issued.⁷⁹ The inquiry into the election of Brick is informative as to his means of political persuasion. The principal complaint against Brick's return was the eligibility of his voters. The listing of some of the names of these electors confirms the character of Brick's constituency. The names Robert McBride, Patrick McCluskey, Michael Hogan, Michael Morin, Patrick Sullivan, Michael Brady and Joseph O'Brien reveal his Irish base of support. Most of the witnesses sworn voted upon a freehold, many likely having received that status only shortly before election day.

This was not Brick's only tactic, however. A voter, William Pettinger, stated that "[i]t was difficult to get to the poll on account of the crowd. [He t]hought that Mr. Brick's voters disliked to allow their opponents to come up fairly".⁸⁰ Once in power, Brick also tore a page from the Bradley book of political patronage. The Tax Collector for the Town of Hamilton in 1843 was a man by the name of John Brick.

Daniel Kelly served Ward 4 as Police Board member from 1844 to

1846. He later became alderman for St. Patrick's Ward in the City of Hamilton in 1847, and it was he who contested Brick's election in 1843. Kelly was a carriage maker by trade and he advertised his artisanal capabilities widely.⁸¹ Kelly's elections went uncontested throughout his tenure as member, and it appears that he was a solid, community-oriented politician. His principal contribution to Corktown's Irish was in employment. The Board of Police minutes for the years 1844 to 1846 contain long lists of labourers who the Town employed casually to work on the streets. These names are almost all Irish. The Accounts sheet for October 13, 1845 listed Jonathon Quipp, James Heaney, Robert Quinan, Michael Kelly, John McGleus, John McBrien and Darby O Keef for services rendered.⁸² Kelly himself secured contracts with the Town, in turn, to employ his fellow Irishmen in public works. In February of 1845, the Accounts list reads; "D.Kelly. Acc[oun]t for clear[in]g snow in the 3rd & 4th Ward...3.16.101/2".⁸³ On November 23, 1846, citing "Work on Street", the Accounts sheet list G. McWharter, Dennis Kiley, Henry Woods, and "D. Keley & others".⁸⁴

These Irish ward politicians each functioned differently, but the thrust of their political careers were the same. Whether through pay-off or patronage, they gave something back to the community which they represented. The annual March municipal elections marked a time when, through electoral campaigning, the community of Corktown was brought together. Associational life, then, in mutual assistance, factional rivalry, and local politics displayed the cultural cohesion of working-class Corktown.

The cognitive dimensions of Corktown, from 1832 to 1847,

composed a final layer of the Irish presence in early Hamilton. The Roman Catholic Church, the British House saloon, the common market and Irish associational life were each nodal points for emigrants which served to foster an identity of space and personalities in the growing town. Of these, St. Mary's Church was undoubtedly the most salient institution. The parish structure and the parish priest symbolised, more than any other institution, the Catholic *and* Irish presence in Hamilton. It was Vicar-General MacDonald, for example, who received a requisition in April of 1844 to "call a meeting of your congregation and their friends, on any day you think fit, to take into consideration the insult given to the whole Catholic world in pointedly striking out the name of every Catholic Juror on the panel, in the late State trials in Ireland."⁸⁵ The petition was signed by 35 Irish Catholic household heads and signifies both the importance of the church and Catholicism to that community as well as emigrants' continued affinity for Old World affairs. Each of Corktown's institutions remains significant, however, in the distinct role that they each played in the Irish community. Both inward-looking and insulating, these nodal points served as cultural footholds for Famine countrymen arriving after 1847.

Endnotes

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⁵Dolan, The Immigrant Church, p. 111.

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⁹PAO. MacDonell Papers, "List of Catholic Missions in Western Canada, 1832."

¹⁰ARCAT. MacDonell Papers, Cassidy to MacDonell, 10 March 1835.

¹¹Ibid., 3 August 1836.

¹²Ibid., Cassidy to Gaulin, 29 March 1836.

¹³Western Mercury, 23 January 1834, p. 3, col. 3.

¹⁴Ibid., 21 April 1834, p. 2, col. 6.

¹⁵Ibid., 10 July 1834, p. 2, col. 6.

¹⁶MacDonell Papers, MacDonell to MacDonald, 8 February 1839.

¹⁷See Charles Ambrose Carter and Thomas Melville Bailey (eds.) The Diary of Sophia MacNab (Hamilton, 1968), p.8.

¹⁸Ibid., MacDonald to Gaulin, 26 October 1839.

- ¹⁹City of Hamilton, City Directory, 1869. UDCMU.
- ²⁰MacDonell Papers, Cassidy to Gaulin, 29 March 1836.
- ²¹Ibid., Cassidy to MacDonell, 9 December 1836.
- ²²Ibid., Burke to MacDonell, 18 October 1837.
- ²³Ibid., Cassidy to Gaulin, 26 December 1837.
- ²⁴MacDonald revived The Catholic in Hamilton again from 1841 to 1844. The readership was small, but the Vicar - General felt compelled to re-establish this organ in defence of Roman Catholicism against Upper Canadian Protestant journalism. He wrote in December of 1839, "I am pressed from all quarters to publish a paper, to repel the abuse and refute the calumnies, so unsparingly renewed in the Protestant priests against our holy Religion." MacDonell Papers, MacDonald to Gaulin, 7 December 1839.
- ²⁵William Perkins Bull, From MacDonell to McGuigan: The History of the Growth of the Roman Catholic Church in Upper Canada (Toronto, 1939), p. 117.
- ²⁶Ibid., p. 119.
- ²⁷MacDonell Papers, MacDonald to Gaulin, 19 December 1838.
- ²⁸Ibid., 26 October 1839.
- ²⁹Ibid., 5 August 1839.
- ³⁰Ibid., 9 March 1841.
- ³¹These names are mentioned in newspaper advertisements for their services and establishments in the early town.
- ³²Thernstrom, Poverty and Progress, p.177.
- ³³Ibid., 22 February 1841. For a discussion of the phenomenon of "brick and mortar" priests in North American church-building, see Dolan, The Immigrant Church, pp. 45 -67.
- ³⁴MacDonell Papers, Power to Connolly, 29 February 1844.
- ³⁵Ibid., Power to MacDonald, 6 March 1844.
- ³⁶Bull, From MacDonell to McGuigan, p. 133.
- ³⁷Katz, The People of Hamilton, p. 126.

³⁸Joyce O'Connor, The Young Drinkers: A Cross - National Study of Social and Cultural Influences. (London, 1978), p. 8.

³⁹Ibid., p. 49.

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⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid., 23 January 1834, p. 3, col.3.

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⁴⁹DeLottinville, "Joe Beef", p. 16.

⁵⁰Hamilton Census and Assessment, 1838 and 1841.

⁵¹Hamilton Gazette, 2 February 1846, p. 3, col.3, and Commercial Advertiser, 13 July 1847.

⁵²Hamilton Board of Police Minutes, 20 October 1834.

⁵³Ibid., 27 March 1837.

⁵⁴Ibid., 22 May 1837.

⁵⁵Duis, "The Saloon", p. 95.

⁵⁶O'Connor, The Young Drinkers.

⁵⁷Western Mercury, 25 July 1833, p.2, col.6.

⁵⁸Ibid., 21 April 1834, p.3, col. 1.

- ⁵⁹Hamilton Board of Police Minutes, 16 January 1837.
- ⁶⁰Robert F. Harney, "Records of the Mutual Benefit Society: A Source for Ethnocultural Studies," Polyphony, 2,1 (Winter, 1979), p. 18.
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- ⁶²Hamilton Gazette, 12 February 1846, p. 2, col. 1.
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- ⁶⁴Hamilton Gazette, 23 March 1836. As quoted in Doucet and Weaver, "Town Fathers", p. 89.
- ⁶⁵Hamilton Board of Police Minutes, 28 September 1846.
- ⁶⁶Ibid., 12 October 1846.
- ⁶⁷Houston and Smyth, "The Orange Order".
- ⁶⁸Kealey, "Religious Riot".
- ⁶⁹Leslie H. Saunders, The Story of Orangeism (Toronto, 1941), leaf, "Directory of All Lodges Which Originated in or Existed in Ontario West, Since 1830."
- ⁷⁰Ibid., p. 29.
- ⁷¹Hamilton Board of Police Minutes, 20 July 1836.
- ⁷²Western Mercury, 1 August 1833, p. 2, col. 4.
- ⁷³Duis, The Saloon, p. 126.
- ⁷⁴Hamilton Board of Police Minutes, 5 March 1839.
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- ⁷⁶Ibid., 2 April 1839.
- ⁷⁷Ibid., 1 June 1839.
- ⁷⁸Ibid., 16 February 1841.
- ⁷⁹Ibid., 13 March 1843.
- ⁸⁰Ibid.
- ⁸¹For example, see Hamilton Gazette, 3 November 1845.

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Chapter 5: Conclusion

The pattern of neighbourhood development in Corktown, Hamilton, 1832-1847, suggests the process of community formation based upon a common culture. In historical research, identifying a "culture" is a difficult task. Whether class-based, gender-based or concerning immigrant groups, the types of tangible evidence are less profound and invariably more elusive. Culture, rather, is implicit in the sources used to explore the past. Focussing on the way people organized their lives in history can give some insight into the "group's sense of group". By studying the physical setting of where people lived, their behaviour, and the institutions which served their needs, the historian can begin to analyse "otherness" in the past.

The focus of this study has been on pre-Famine Irish immigration to British North America. The economic and social environment of Ireland in the years before 1845 was that of crisis. The failure of inheritance practices to assure a new generation a competence, the reorganisation of landholding patterns to facilitate grazier farming, and a series of minor crop failures worked in consort to make emigration an attractive option to many alienated sons and daughters of rural Catholic families debating their futures. By the late 1840s, the situation had taken a turn for the worse. The "Great Hunger" was a watershed in Irish and Irish-Canadian history as thousands were forced from their native country, many of whom were taken in by the welcome

extended by Canadians. Unlike Ireland's exiles after 1845, pre-Famine emigrants carefully planned their departures as part of family economic strategies. Their emigration was one of choice. Given the Canadian historiographical preoccupation with the immigrant "victims" of the Great Hunger, it is useful to compare their experience with that of Canada's pre-Famine Irish population.

Within this context, a second dichotomy emerges. It is agreed that the pattern of predominance of urban settlement among Irish settlers in nineteenth century America does not fit the experience of Irish settlers in Canada. Among Irish newcomers to British North America, both pre- and post-Famine, the majority of migrants favoured rural settlement. The rural focus of most of the research performed on Irish communities in nineteenth century Canada parallels this trend historiographically. Yet, it is also true that the Catholic Irish established and maintained substantial and, in many cases, lasting neighbourhoods and communities in nineteenth-century urban Canada, the remnants of which remain with us today. One need only recognise Toronto's "Cabbagetown", Montreal's "Griffintown" and Hamilton's "Corktown" to see examples in this vein. Though in small numbers, Irish Catholics did settle in urban Canada, and their presence and contribution to the growth of these towns and cities are significant, both in the larger social history of urban Canada and towards understanding the motives of a minority of Catholic Irish emigrants who consciously chose urban dwelling. By necessity, the urban Catholic Irish created Irish neighbourhoods to ease their transition in the New World, to maintain links with the old, and to establish a sense of

"Irishness" as a source of solidarity, comfort and protection to the members of the community. The consequence was evident in eastern North American cities: the urban Irish established cohesive, integrated communities throughout the nineteenth-century. It is this process that is in evidence in the foundation of "Corktown", in Hamilton, Upper Canada, from 1832 to 1847.

▷ Corktown was a series of Catholic Irish cluster settlements in the southeastern area of the early town. Though the Irish never comprised a majority of the region's inhabitants, Corktown possessed a distinct spatial identity. It was home to Irish merchants and artisan shops, grocers, taverns and Irish ward politicians. Irish residents in this area were poorly housed, working-class transients living in the most downtrodden region of town. Yet, among these people was a strong, thriving cultural cohesion. That culture was always larger than the neighbourhood boundaries or the number of people involved. Through their interaction in building St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, John Bradley's "British Hotel", the John Street market and Irish merchant shops, and in their associational life, the Corktown Irish asserted their ethnicity in the New World. The Irish established an institutional framework which served the broad needs of the early community. The founding of a St. Patrick's Society, for example, sought to keep charity within the ethnic group. In addition, the solidarity of Ward 4 voters under Irish politicians attests to this cultural cohesion. The importance of their cultural association, then, is clear.

However, the Irish were also an integral part of Hamilton's larger society. They supplied a portion of the town's labouring

population and, as such, were part of the human resources that were necessary for Hamilton's urbanisation in the years before 1850. Though the socioeconomic cleavage that separated the town fathers from the Irish newcomers was great, little class or ethnic conflict existed in pre-1850 Hamilton. Irish Catholics relied upon the wage employment that the town offered, and made ends meet by utilising familiar extra-market means. By the same token, Irish Catholics were comparatively well-received as immigrants in the pre-Famine era because they were viewed, in turn, as a productive part of an early capitalistic labour force. They were poor, to be sure, but they carved out economic and cultural niches for themselves in an environment concerned with growth and loyalty to an established colonial regime. Hamilton needed Corktown's Irish as much as they needed Hamilton. Their relatively small numbers presented no threat to a developing English-Canadian and Protestant cultural hegemony. Such was not the case, as we have seen, with the Catholic Famine migrants who arrived in great numbers after 1847. Their arrival signified a new era for Catholics and Irishmen in Canadian cities, one which taxed the religious tolerance of the host society and tested its ability to cope with the problems of a diseased and poverty-stricken population of newcomers.

The pre-Famine era was bereft of that stigma. In it, an Irish Catholic emigrant population successfully established ethnic enclaves in rural *and* urban settings which became bases for Irish settlement and ethnic interaction in the New World. The example of Corktown, Hamilton, Upper Canada is testament to this phenomenon.

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