

Ethnic Cinema in Nickelodeon Era New York City

BY PATRICK J. MULLINS

At the turn of the century dramatic new developments in motion picture technology converged with dynamic social changes characterized by entrepreneurial opportunity and mass European immigration to America. A sizable body of research has focused attention on the role of immigrants in the nickelodeon era, which occurred between 1906 when small storefront movie houses surged in popularity, and 1914 when larger movie theaters began to dominate. Incorporating the findings of some of the major contributions to that discourse, this essay considers the drive for both cultural assimilation and subcultural continuity in this new social environment, and attempts to evaluate the somewhat broader topic of ethnic identity as a determining factor, or “generative mechanism,” for patterns of film exhibition and spectatorship in New York.

It has been estimated that by 1908 there were between eight and ten thousand nickelodeons in the U.S. and more than 600 in New York City.¹ Until this time films had been fea-

tured acts in vaudeville programs, and were regularly shown in amusement parks and by traveling exhibitors.² Beginning in 1896 storefront nickelodeon theaters began replacing Kinetoscope parlors in which customers had viewed short movies on individual hand-cranked machines. In the new motion picture houses, named for their original 5 cents admission price, films were projected onto a screen for audiences that often numbered two hundred or more. Throughout the following decade this public viewing experience gradually gained social acceptance as exhibitors refined their promotional strategies, and technical and creative advancements allowed for increasingly longer, more sophisticated films. By 1908 the total number of moving picture exhibitions had dramatically expanded, including unlicensed exhibitions in New York tenements and backrooms.³

The simultaneous occurrence of this technological and cultural phenomenon with the arrival of millions of new immigrants to New York constituted a vital combination for the development of both the motion picture indus-

NYIHR member Patrick Mullins is the producer/director of the fifty-seven minute documentary, From Shore to Shore: Irish Traditional Music in New York City (1993). He is a music editor for feature films and is currently completing a masters in Cinema Studies at New York University.



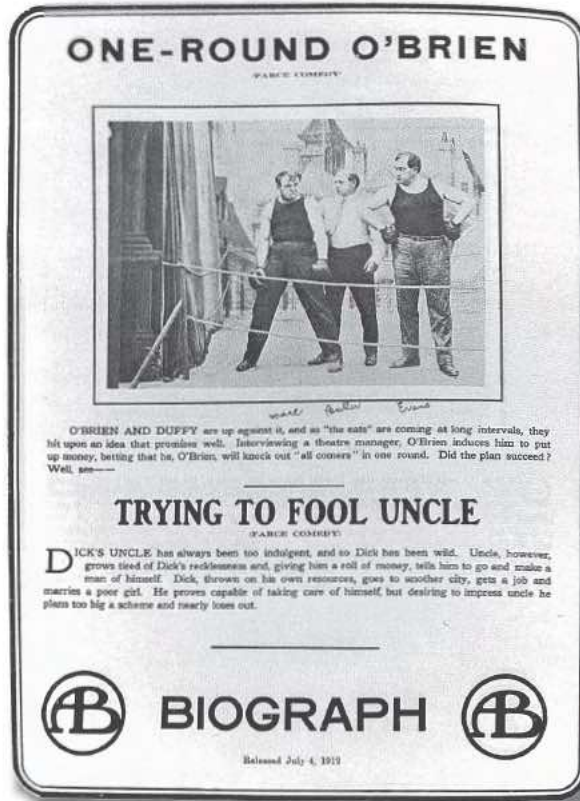
Photo: New York's Comet Theatre, 100 Third Avenue between East 12th and 13th Streets circa 1910. In the 1930s it was known as the Lyric Theatre. Courtesy of Quigley Photographic Archive, Special Collections Division, Georgetown University Library.

try and the ethnic character of New York City life. At the same time that the immigrant population was swelling there was a corresponding

East 189th Street) and another in Melrose at 3222 Third Avenue.

Most accounts of nickelodeons concern the experience of the great number of non-English speaking immigrant audiences for whom film-going was likely more than just an entertaining diversion. Reports of storefront movie houses in the Lower East Side paint a rich and colorful picture of working class immigrants of various ethnicities and ages, mingling to laugh, cry, and marvel at moving pictures, and to sing along with the illustrated "song-slides" between reel changes. Scholars have suggested that the films shown performed three major roles in the lives of these immigrant audiences.⁴ On an immediate level they provided "an escape from the realities of work and tenement life," at a time when jobs for immigrant workers often lasted twelve hours per day. Secondly, film shows could function as "makeshift 'schools' for learning English," as immigrants collectively deciphered subtitles and song lyrics. Most significantly, silent films could function as "a form of socialization and apprenticeship into American life," revealing the "social topography" of the culture,⁵ and providing "a common cultural experience"⁶ for immigrants of diverse backgrounds. This process of "Americanization" through movies was inspired by "a 'melting pot' philosophy where different races and ethnicities would be amalgamated into newly-minted Americans."⁷ Movie houses functioned as "centers of communication and cultural diffusion,"⁸ where immigrants had the opportunity to discuss their mutual experiences and to learn how to negotiate their way in American society.

Although a Russell Sage Foundation survey "revealed that in 1911, 78 percent of the New York audience consisted of members 'from the working class'"⁹ (and presumably many of these were immigrants), it has been argued that "to that audience, movies meant escape...a simple refuge."¹⁰ Russell Merritt proposes that few films actually performed an acculturating function: "For all their popularity with American audiences, they revealed little about America. Indeed the majority of them were produced in France: exports of the Pathé Freres company."¹¹ He observes that "few if any films stressed ethnic ties, few chronicled adventures of immigrants—their arrival in the New World, life in tenements, or...working conditions in shops



increase in the number of ethnic motion picture theaters. By 1911, judging from the listings in *Trow's Business Directory*, about one-third of all New York City nickelodeons were ethnic-owned or -operated. The majority of these were Jewish and Italian, but a considerable number of Irish-named motion picture exhibitors were listed from 1908 to 1911. Their locations illustrate the recent dispersion of Irish to new neighborhoods around the city. For example, James F. Darcy exhibited motion pictures in the Lincoln Square neighborhood at 114 West 65th Street, James E. Brady on Amsterdam Avenue in Washington Heights, and Daniel Donegan on Third Avenue in Yorkville. There were three Irish nickelodeons in Harlem at this time: George O'Brien's on Second Avenue near 116th Street, Patrick Bray's on 116th Street near St. Nicholas Avenue, and Thomas Gillen's at 266 West 135th Street. Joseph Driscoll operated two Bronx cinemas in 1910, one in Fordham (Webster Avenue near

Advertisements:
(above) There were three One-Round O'Brien sequels made to this 1912 farce-comedy film. Biograph Bulletins, April 1912. Courtesy of M.R. Casey.

(right) Irish travelogue film screened on 16 March 1910 at the Manhattan Casino. Irish Advocate, 19 February 1910. Courtesy of J.T. Ridge.

and factories.”¹² For example, of 1,056 American-produced films reviewed in *Moving Picture World* from 9 March 1907 through December 1908, only eight specifically concerned the immigrant or the poor. This seems to refute the notion that, in America at this time, “cinema imposed an essentially assimilationist ideology.”¹³ But Merritt’s definition of what constitutes assimilationist films seems overly narrow if one considers the potential for many films to convey, through attitudes and perspectives, contemporary conceptions of what it meant to be “American.” His focus on film content also overlooks the potential socializing process that accompanied the motion picture viewing experience.

In writing about the rise of American consumerism and its effect on immigrant film audiences, Judith Mayne contends that movies, like advertising, created a space in which spectators were provided with an image of what was desirable in American culture, creating “the illusion that certain ideals were shared equally by middle-class and working-class people,” and that this focus on consumption (i.e., the American dream) was effected by the image of “an homogenous population pursuing the same goals.”¹⁴ Lester D. Friedman notes that the message of many of the Jewish films of the silent era was “to reject the Old World socialism for New American values of capitalism and democracy...[the films] nourish the cherished vision of America as a vast melting pot of ethnic groups who discard their individual cultural heritages to form one people.”¹⁵ Such films overtly conveyed the assimilationist vision, yet the important point is that movie audiences could be engaged in a process of cultural accommodation simply by the movie-going experience itself. The fact that ethnic characters in movies were customarily played by “actors of WASP descent” also helped to reinforce an American norm of reality for immigrant audiences, where “identification with character means identification with the effacement of ethnicity.”¹⁶

Merritt’s definition of immigrant films—those specifically depicting the immigrant experience in the New World—also fails to take into account the potential appeal for immigrant audiences of historical and cultural stories set in Europe. This more general category of ethnic

films includes Old World Yiddish films like *A Brevele der Mamen* (1912) and Jewish movies that “competed with assimilationist ‘melting-pot’ films,”¹⁷ as well as early Italian “spectacles” such as *Rome or Death* (1914, advertised in *Moving Picture World*), *The Last Days of Pompeii* (Ambrosio, 1908 & Caserini, 1911), and *Quo Vadis?* (Guazzoni, 1912).¹⁸ Although such Italian spectacles were probably shown at more middle-class movie houses, as evidenced by a photo of *The Last Days of Pompeii* (Rudolfi, 1913) on the marquee at the Bijou Theatre, Broadway at 30th Street,¹⁹ the audiences for these imported films no doubt included numbers of immigrant spectators who could afford the higher ticket prices.

It has been said that “the industry made more movies about the Irish than any other ethnic minority”²⁰ and that “between 1900 and 1929 alone, approximately 230 films featured clearly discernable Jewish characters—a figure far surpassing the number of films featuring other ethnic types.”²¹ Not enough has been written about Italians to quote figures for this time period, but the New York State Motion Picture Commission (state censor) screened and evaluated over 200 films of Italian origin

“...audiences could be engaged in a process of cultural accomodation simply by the movie-going experience itself.”



between the years 1921, when the Commission was instituted, and 1930. It would seem reasonable to assume that had the Commission been

operating in the first two decades of the century, that it would have encountered a significant number of Italian films entering the state and subsequently being screened in New York City. But regardless of which ethnic group was most

struct.²⁴ Yet in examining the Irish newspapers for that time, extremely little information in the way of advertisements, notices or reviews concerning films of any kind were found. Only screenings of Irish non-fiction films are occasionally publicized in the Irish press. For example, an ad in the *Irish Advocate* in 1904 solicited readers to "Take a trip to Ireland! by means of wonderful Vitagraph Motion Pictures," to be screened at the American Theater Hall at Eighth Avenue and 42nd Street. *The Gaelic American* in March of 1920 announced that a collection of newsreels entitled "Irish Moving Pictures, Most Unique Collection of Irish Subjects Ever Presented to Public," would be screened at the Central Opera House on East 67th Street in Yorkville, an Irish and German neighborhood at the time. An Irish history film prominently featured in *Moving Picture World* was *Ireland a Nation* (Walter MacNamara, 1914), based on the 1798 and 1803 Irish nationalist rebellions.²⁵ Although "chiefly directed at an Irish-American audience,"²⁶ there were no ads for it in the New York Irish newspapers. These few examples hardly constitute convincing evidence for a vibrant picture of film exhibition in the New York Irish community.

Yet forty-seven Irish-subject films are listed in the American Film Institute catalog for the years 1900–1910 (some farces and dramatic tales, mostly newsreels),²⁷ and numerous Irish films such as *Shamus O'Brien* (Selig, 1907) and *The Irish Blacksmith* (Selig, 1907) are advertised and profiled in trade publications like *Moving Picture World*.²⁸ One possible explanation for this discrepancy is a low level of interest in early Irish subject films due to their highly stereotyped character. Films like *Irish Politics* (Edison, 1897)²⁹ and *The Finish of Bridget McKeen* (1901)³⁰ relied on time-worn images of drinking, brawling and thick-witted Irish caricatures derived from earlier vaudeville conventions. Another, *Murphy's Wake* (1907),³¹ created a public outcry as being "a deliberate insult to a respectable race."³² In fact news stories of protests by the Irish community over negative portrayals in movies are more commonplace than ads or reviews for Irish films over the years.³³ *Whom The Gods Destroy* (Vitagraph, 1917), about the 1916 Easter Week Rebellion in Ireland, met with such hostility in New York that it was "immediately withdrawn...the slan-

often portrayed on the screen, it's clear that collectively these ethnic groups had a great impact on the content of early silent films, and presumably this presence was mirrored in the composition of film audiences. While this assumption has been supported in various accounts including the Russell Sage survey cited above, much more needs to be gleaned about the character of audiences attending the various ethnic films screened in New York, and the specific locations where such films were shown.

Considering the significant proportion of Irish-born citizens of New York City circa 1900 (21.7%),²² in addition to second and third generation Irish Americans, and the fact that there were three Irish newspapers published in the City at the time,²³ a portrait of the New York Irish community's film-going habits in the nickelodeon era should be possible to recon-

Advertisement:

In 1911 the Kalem Company of New York released a film based on the popular stage play *The Colleen Bawn*. It was filmed on location in Killarney. *Moving Picture World*, 23 September 1911. Courtesy of P.J. Mullins.

derous film...reeks with gross insults to the Irish race."³⁴ But the Irish were not the only objects of stereotypical treatment in early silent films. Speaking about the nickelodeon era in general, Joseph M. Curran notes that "despite motion picture dependence on immigrant patrons...immigrant and ethnic stereotypes abounded."³⁵ Numerous films featured what was thought to be the typical behavior of 'chinks' and 'dagos,'³⁶ as well as "unscrupulous Jewish merchants."³⁷

The trade press gave extensive coverage to the filmed versions of the popular Dion Boucicault stage plays *The Colleen Bawn* (1911) and *Arrah-Na-Pogue* (1911), both produced in Ireland by an American company, Kalem, that were supposedly "oriented towards an (Irish) American audience."³⁸ A 1914 Edison film entitled *The Blind Fiddler* about an Irish musician was profiled in the September 1914 issue of the *Edison Kinetogram*.³⁹ But advertisements or reviews of these are also conspicuously absent from Irish-American newspapers of the time. Perhaps the images portrayed in these films, positive as they may have been, were perceived as overly romantic and old-fashioned by Irish immigrants and Irish-American audiences who were preoccupied with getting on with their modern lives in the New World. Although romanticised images of thatched cottages and fair colleens abounded in the popular music of the day,⁴⁰ perhaps to the New York Irish mind film was more properly suited for the realistic depiction of the homeland and its revered statesmen (and occasional women) through newsreels, travelogues, and thematic compilations of actuality films rather than for comedy and fiction.

As with the Irish-American press, the entertainment pages of the weekly *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* contained several theater ads promoting Italian opera and music halls each week, although the addition of "*cinematografia*" at the bottom of the bills (no film titles were given) doesn't appear until early 1914. One exception is the July 1912 ad for the Eden Musee, an established middle-class venue, featuring "*cinematografo di lusso*" ("deluxe") and "*il mondo in cera*" ("the world in wax"). Interestingly, the 2 January 1914 issue contains a classified ad for "*cinematografo si insigna*" ("projectionist license") offered by the

Manhattan Moving Picture Operators School, 5 East 14th Street, as well as an employment ad seeking "*cinematografo (stabilite da 5 anni)*" ("projectionist with five years experience"), for a theater at 155 West 14th Street. The only advertisement for a specific film, prior to newsreels of the Italian-Austrian War in 1915, is for the previously mentioned *Rome or Death* in the 17 April 1914 issue, but the two theaters screening the film are in Philadelphia, not in New York.

The Astor, another uptown theater showing the spectacle *Quo Vadis?* ran an ad, not in *Il Progresso*, but in the German-American paper *The New Yorker Staats-Zeitung* (1 September 1913), suggesting that this type of epic film was indeed directed at more general middle-class Americans regardless of ethnic backgrounds rather than at a specifically Italian immigrant audience. Although the *Staats-Zeitung* was a German language newspaper published in New York, most of the entertainment ads for local theater and music venues reflect an interest in mainstream American entertainment, with some emphasis on visiting German performers like the violinist Fritz Kreisler. The only evidence for German films is an ad in the 22 February 1914 issue for *Die Kino Koenigin* recently screened at the Metropole Theater in Berlin. No other information is given, and it's unclear what kind of film this was. The existence of specifically German theaters is not evident from the pages of the *Staats-Zeitung*. As in the Irish case, German-American immigration and assimilation had been in progress for considerably longer than for Italians and European Jews at this time, which may account for the stronger presence of Italian and Jewish nickelodeons in New York.

A somewhat similar situation was found in the *Jewish Daily Forward*, also published in New York. *The Forward*, published in Yiddish, was quite political in tone but it contains numerous Yiddish theater ads for the years 1907 through 1919 when, seemingly, the first movie ads appear. In the 1 September 1919 issue there is an ad for the National Wintergarden in the Lower East Side with a notice for "movies before burlesque."⁴¹ Although famous names in Yiddish theater, such as Jacob Adler and Boris Thomashevsky are featured, the presence of the multitude of

"...an ad in
the Irish
Advocate in
1904 solicit-
ed readers to
'Take a trip
to Ireland!
by means of
wonderful
Vitagraph
Motion
Pictures'..."

small movie houses known to be entertaining Jewish immigrants at this time is not apparent in the pages of *The Forward*. Jewish-run movie houses must have featured films of Jewish life such as *Old Isaacs, the Pawnbroker* (Biograph, 1908, script by D.W. Griffith), *Romance of a Jewess* (Biograph, 1908, written and directed by D.W. Griffith), *The Ghetto Seamstress* (Yankee, 1910), and *The Passover Miracle* (Kalem, 1913), as well as the occasional Yiddish film (“the flow of Yiddish movies was rarely sustained; each release was something of an event”).⁴² Given the scarcity of ads for cinemas however, it is difficult to acquire details of film



exhibitions. This paucity of data in the way of advertising materials seems to be symptomatic of all ethnic groups during this period. Why is this the case?

It has been proposed that in the nickelodeon era “no moving picture shows were as heavily publicized as those of New York City.”⁴³ The question is where and how were they publicized, and what evidence of that publicity has survived? Preliminary searches were undertaken in an effort to locate advertising of this type, as well as photographs of billboards or marquees containing related information. The ethnic press contained little information, as did mainstream newspapers including *The New York Times* and *The New York Tribune*. Trade publications like *Moving Picture World*, *Variety*, and *Nickelodeon* all ran generic ads, notices, and reviews intended for national readers and industry professionals. No specific local theaters were identified with

regular movie screenings. A number of historical photographs contain theater marquees, placards and billboards for moving pictures, but the few images of New York theaters showing ethnic films that have survived occur considerably later in time.⁴⁴ These include a photo of the B.F. Keith theater on West 14th Street showing the Irish-American comedy *Private Izzy Murphy* (1926), a popular example of the “Irish-Jewish” film subgenre,⁴⁵ and a 1929 photo of an Irish motion picture playhouse on West 175th Street in Manhattan, with “Emmett Moore—*Erin’s Isle*” on the marquee.⁴⁶

Most small movie houses probably wouldn’t have been able to afford to print programs, and instead may have relied on ephemeral publicity materials such as blackboards, handwritten posters, and cheaply printed handbills. Given the local character of many small theaters, conventional advertising for film programs may simply have been a needless expense. The lack of evidence in the way of advertising materials suggests that news of showings was essentially a neighborhood affair spread by word of mouth, or readily observable to community members during the natural course of their daily activities. Merritt argues that “most important nickelodeons were seldom built in the worker’s community,”⁴⁷ their locations “determined less by proximity to their clientele than by proximity to the beaten path of vaudeville houses.”⁴⁸ While this was increasingly the case with the transition to larger, more middle-class-oriented theaters, most scholarly accounts agree that many nickelodeons were situated in immigrant neighborhoods.

In his study of nickelodeons in New York, Robert C. Allen observed that “the 1908 *Trow’s Business Directory* lists 123 motion picture exhibitions in Manhattan...forty-two were located in the Lower East Side (...almost certainly proletarian and immigrant oriented).”⁴⁹ Incorporating a quote by Thomas Kessner, he pointed out that in this area of the city, which was “heavily populated by recent Jewish immigrants...‘congestion also produced economic dividends’ for peddlers and small shopkeepers, whose potential market numbered in the hundreds of thousands.”⁵⁰ In this portrayal of immigrant neighborhood life it is quite conceivable that many storefront movie

Advertisement: This Irish travelogue had 25 scenes filmed during the summer of 1904, including “leaving New York for a visit to Ireland. What New York Harbor looks like when on an ocean liner.” Irish Advocate, 24 December 1904. Courtesy of J.T. Ridge.

houses thrived on patrons from the immediate community, just as would a grocer, barber or baker. Rather than having to be concerned with attracting audiences, in this milieu, immigrant exhibitors merely established theaters in neighborhoods where audiences were ready and waiting, and in which they themselves felt at home.

This picture of immigrant film exhibitions occurring in ethnic communities is born out by a further analysis of the *Trow's Business Directory of Manhattan and the Bronx*. There is an interesting increase in ethnic-named exhibitions over the ten-year period examined, and the degree to which these nickelodeons are situated in what we know were corresponding ethnic communities at that time.

The table (right) contains a breakdown of moving picture company listings according to ethnicity for the years 1902 through 1911. Although simple identification by ethnic name can not in itself definitively establish immigrant status or ethnic identification, the analysis suggests a degree of mutual involvement by ethnic film exhibitors and ethnic spectators in the overall picture of New York's motion picture business at the height of the nickelodeon era.

It is worth taking note of a number of the listings. The first several years consist primarily of the big names in manufacturing and film production, including American Mutoscope & Biograph Co., American Vitagraph Co., and Edison Projectoscope Co. In 1907 Marcus Lowe's name first appears, as well as the first identifiably Italian and Jewish names. 1908's listing includes William Fox Amusement Co., as well as two apparent listings for women exhibitors, Caroline Sirignano, 196 Grand, and Minnie Stafford, 687 Ninth Avenue. 1910 includes a listing for Boldoces Sisters, 1556 First Avenue, and the first listing for Ragozzini,

Piazza & Riggio, 33 East 4th Street, whose new motion picture theater opening was announced in the December 1909 issue of *The Nickelodeon* (this location later appears as the address of the Teatro Garibaldi in ads in *Il Progresso*).

The argument that ethnic movie exhibitors successfully and amiably integrated their business into ethnic neighborhood life conflicts with Merritt's position that movie theaters catered to working people "through necessity, not through choice...no one connected with the movies much wanted his support—least of all the immigrant film exhibitors who were working their way out of

Number of Moving Pictures and Moving Picture Exhibitions, by Ethnicity in Manhattan and the Bronx, 1902–1911

Year	Total	Jewish	Italian	Irish	German
1902	7				2 (14.3%)
1903	7				1 (5.3%)
1904	14				2 (6.6%)
1905	19				1 (1.3%)
1906	30				
1907	76	4 (5.3%)	3 (3.9%)		
1908*	116	13 (11.3%)	14 (12.1%)	2 (1.7%)	3 (2.6%)
1909	155	22 (14.2%)	17 (11.0%)	6 (3.9%)	2 (1.3%)
1910	188	24 (12.8%)	23 (12.3%)	6 (3.2%)	5 (2.7%)
1911	230	41 (17.8%)	24 (10.5%)	3 (1.3%)	7 (3.1%)

Source: Trow's Business Directory of Manhattan and the Bronx

Notes: *1908 is the first year Trow's split listings between "Apparatus" and "Exhibitions." The table listings for 1902–1907 present Apparatus and Exhibitions combined, the table listings for 1908–1911 reflect Exhibitions only.

Numbers for each ethnic group refer to names distinctly identifiable with each group—numerous additional combinations of ethnic names, such as Irish/Jewish and Irish/German partnerships appear, but these are not included in the figures above. "Total" column reflects individual listings regardless of multiple locations.

the slums with their theaters."⁵¹ These opposing points of view must stand as examples of the "multiple contingent truths"⁵² that comprise our imperfect attempt at a complete historical re-construction of the experience of immigrant film exhibitors.

Ethnic consciousness should have, to some degree, been a motivating factor for the various activities associated with motion picture exhibition in New York City in the first decade and a half of the present century. Only by researching the specifics of local exhibition, i.e. what films were screened, at which theaters, when, and as far as possible by whom, can we learn more about how films were perceived by viewers and what functions they performed regarding issues of cultural accommodation.

Notes

- 1 David Nasaw, *Children of the City: At Work and at Play* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1985) p. 121. See also William Uricchio and Roberta E. Pearson, *Reframing Culture: The Case of the Vitagraph Quality Films* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p.28, in which they cite "estimates ranging from five hundred to eight hundred." The accuracy of this number continues to be a point of scholarly debate. For a recent account of the attempt to determine accurate statistics by accounting for as many names and addresses of actual nickelodeon theaters as possible, see Ben Singer, "Manhattan Nickelodeons: New Data on Audiences and Exhibitors," *Cinema Journal* 34:3 (Spring 1995).
- 2 Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), p. 16.
- 3 "Magistrates Court Bars Use of Tenement Houses for Motion Pictures," *New York Times*, 1/27/1909, 7:4.
- 4 Judith Mayne, "Immigrants and Spectators," *Wide Angle* 5:2 (1982), pp. 32-41.
- 5 Lewis Jacobs, *The Rise of American Film*, quoted in Mayne, *ibid*, p. 33.
- 6 Charles Musser, "Ethnicity, Role Playing, and American Film Comedy: From Chinese Laundry Scene to Whoopee (1894-1930)," in Lester D. Freidman, *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity & the American Cinema* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), p. 40.
- 7 Gary D. Keller, *Hispanics and the United States Film: An Overview and Handbook* (Tempe, AZ: Bilingual Review Press, 1994), p. 5.
- 8 Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Social History of American Movies* (NY: Random House, 1975), p. 18.
- 9 Russell Merritt, "Nickelodeon Theaters 1905-1914: Building an Audience for the Movies" in *The American Film Industry*, ed. Tino Balio (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), pp.59-79, quote from p. 63.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 64.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 65.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 72.
- 13 Charles Musser, "Ethnicity, Role Playing, and American Film Comedy," *op.cit.*, p. 40.
- 14 Mayne, *op.cit.*, p. 34.
- 15 Lester D. Freidman, "Celluloid Assimilation: Jews in American Silent Movies," *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 15:3 (1987), pp. 129-136, quotes from pp. 131, 135, 136.
- 16 Musser, *op.cit.*, p. 56.
- 17 James Hoberman, *Bridge of Light: Yiddish Films Between Two Worlds* (NY: The Museum of Modern Art/Shoken Books, 1991), p. 6.
- 18 Ephraim Katz, *The Film Encyclopedia* (NY: Harper Collins, 1994), p. 681
- 19 From the photo collection of the New-York Historical Society.
- 20 Joseph M. Curran, *Hibernian Green on the Silver Screen: The Irish and American Movies* (NY: Greenwood Press, 1989), p. xvi.
- 21 Freidman, *op.cit.*, p. 130.
- 22 Kenneth T. Jackson, ed. *Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 584.
- 23 *The Gaelic American, the Irish Advocate, and the Irish World.*
- 24 Junko Ogihara attempted something similar in a 1990 article from *Film History*, Vol. 4, pp. 81-87, entitled "The Exhibition of Films for Japanese Americans in Los Angeles During the Silent Film Era." Ogihara's article makes significant use of the mimeographed tabloid *Rafu Shimpo* printed in English and Japanese, which was first published in Los Angeles in 1903. As a distinct and stable entity, with its own community of shops and services including the newspaper, grocers, and movie houses, the Los Angeles Japanese American community provided a fairly focused and reasonably well documented area for research regarding film exhibition.
- 25 *Moving Picture World*, 8/29/1914 , p.1245.
- 26 Kevin Rockett, Luke Gibbons & John Hill, *Cinema and Ireland* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1988), p.13.
- 27 Kevin W. Munden, ed. *The American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures Produced in the United States, Vol. 1 Film Beginnings, 1893 to 1910* (NY: R. R. Bowker, 1971).
- 28 *Moving Picture World*, 3/21/1907 & 1/25/1908. For a comprehensive list of early Irish fiction films see Kevin Rockett, ed. *The Irish Filmography, Fiction Films 1896-1996* (Dublin: Red Mountain Media, 1996).

- 29 Edison Films catalog for projecting machines & kineoscopes 1/20/1897, Theater and Film Division, New York Public Library, Center for the Performing Arts.
- 30 A copy of this film is in the collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
- 31 An advertisement for Miles Brothers lists this film in *Moving Picture World*, 1:6 (1907), p.80.
- 32 *Moving Picture World*, 5/18/1907, p.167.
- 33 *New York Times*, Aug./Sept., 1927. A series of articles chronicle numerous disturbances in New York theatres over depictions of the Irish in the films *Irish Hearts* and *The Callahans and the Murphys*.
- 34 *Gaelic American*, 3/10/1917.
- 35 Curran, op.cit., p. 17.
- 36 *Biograph Bulletins, 1908-1912*, introduction by Eileen Bowser (NY: Octagon Books, 1973).
- 37 Advertisement with synopsis appears in an ad for the Edison Mfg. Co. in *Moving Picture World*, 7/16/1907.
- 38 *Moving Picture World*, 9/23/1911 & 11/18/1911; also Kevin Rockett, et al., *Cinema and Ireland*, p. 9.
- 39 *The Edison Kinetogram*, 10:12 (September, 1914), p. 10. A copy of this film is in the collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
- 40 See William H. A. Williams, *'Twas only An Irishman's Dream: The Image of Ireland and the Irish in American Popular Song Lyrics, 1800-1920* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996).
- 41 Subsequent scholarship reveals that the Essex Street Theater, owned by Charles Steiner and Alfred Weiss, advertised once in *The Forward* in February, 1913; and *The Forward* reported that Jacob Adler's Grand Theater was taken over by Adolph Zukor and Marcus Lowe in 1909 who "turned it into a five-and-ten-cent moving picture and Yiddish vaudeville theater." See Judith Thissen, "Dialogue: Manhattan's Nickelodeons—New York? New York!," *Cinema Journal* 36:4 (Summer 1997), pp. 103, 107(n7). Thissen also stresses the importance of looking beyond *Trow's* and journal entries in this continuing historical quest. She cites the usefulness of police memos, leases, lot lists, and certificates of incorporation. Perhaps useful additions to this list would include parish bulletins and church financial records pertaining to occasional screenings of films on subjects relating to the ethnicity of parish communities.
- 42 Hoberman, op.cit., p. 5.
- 43 Uricchio and Pearson, op.cit., p. 5.
- 44 Photograph collections including *Photographic Views of New York City* (The New York Public Library) and those at the New-York Historical Society were investigated, as well as books and articles featuring nickelodeon photos such as *Offscreen Spaces: Images of Early Cinema Production and Exhibition* by Richard Kozarski. See also Jay Leyda & Charles Musser, *Before Hollywood: Turn-of-the-Century American Film* (NY: Hudson Hills Press, 1987).
- 45 Billy Rose Collection, Theater and Film Division, New York Public Library, Center for the Performing Arts.
- 46 See fiche 649, C2-3 in *Photographic Views of New York City* (New York Public Library). Collectors and leading movie poster and "movie material" shops were investigated in hopes of locating theater "lobby cards" or community "window cards" publicizing upcoming films. Only one such window card from a later period was located and the closest thing to an ethnic film on the bill was *Mr. Moto Takes a Vacation* starring Peter Lorre (RKO Fordham, 1939).
- 47 Merritt, op.cit., p. 67.
- 48 *Ibid.*, p. 72.
- 49 Robert C. Allen, "Motion Picture Exhibition in Manhattan 1906-1912: Beyond the Nickelodeon," *Cinema Journal* 18:2 (Spring 1979), pp. 3-15, quote from p. 4. This figure falls far below the various estimates of the total number of nickelodeons in Manhattan at the time. Though it is clear that many, perhaps the majority, of nickelodeon theaters did not advertise in *Trow's*, its listings provide a valuable body of evidence from which to begin work.
- 50 *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- 51 Merritt, op.cit., p. 65
- 52 Linda Williams, "Mirrors Without Memories: Truth, History, and the New Documentary," *Film Quarterly* 46:3 (1993), pp. 9-21, quote from p. 16.