Irish Rural Culture and the Bergen Hill Riots: Immigrant Workers and Industrial Protest in the Mid-1800s

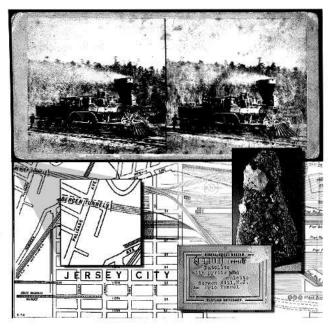
BY HUGH E. O'ROURKE

n the middle of the nineteenth century, Irish immigrants to New York and beyond provided much of the labor for the large American construction projects of the era. The infrastructure building projects, which provided the country with its railroads, canals, roads, and aqueducts, were completed to a large extent by Irish workers. The history of these projects is filled with accounts of collective violence. Immigrant Irish workers were quick to resort to violence in a host of situations. An illustrative local case was the long series of riots that occurred during the building of the railroad and tunnel in Hudson County, New Jersey. The area under construction, now a part of Jersey City, was referred to as Bergen Hill. Many of the issues and problems present at other construction disorders were involved at Bergen Hill.

EARLY IRISH LABOR EXPERIENCE

Irish immigrants in the 1800s arrived with few industrial skills. However, they were strong and willing workers. Without education or skills, most were absorbed into the construction industry, where over half the employees were foreignborn and half of this number were from Ireland.¹

Irish immigrant laborers were exploited by the construction industry that required their services. While Irish immigrant laborers recruited in gangs completed many of the large canal and railroad systems, the work sites were in rural locations, and frequent movement was often required as sections of the work were completed. Most laborers lived in temporary housing without wives, families, friends, or the spiritual consolation of the clergy. Alcohol abuse, inadequate wages, and violence were constant features in the lives of the laborers. Other employment opportunities in major cities also tended to offer backbreaking labor at very low wages.



Although some labor historians view workers in the first half of the nineteenth century as belonging to a distinctive working class that was in conflict with capitalism, this position does not seem true in the case of the unskilled Famine immigrants.2 The early Famine immigrants had no history of industrial activity. English immigrants who were influenced by the Chartist movement that had started in Britain during the 1830s formed many of the earliest unions in New York. The unskilled and poverty-stricken Irish of the 1840s and 1850s were usually not prepared to organize unions until they began to gain a foothold in industry. The rioting, drinking, and interpersonal violence of the Irish canal and railroad laborers were not evidence of a class struggle. Rather than developing a distinctive working-class culture, as did other more skilled American laborers, the Irish working-class culture initially tended to reflect the agrarian Irish rural culture. This robust rural culture was highlighted by alcohol, vigorous

Illustration: An Erie-Lackawanna map indicating the Bergen Hill area, a stereoview of an Erie steam locomotive from the 1850s, and a rock sample from the Bergen Tunnel excavation.

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©2000. Published with the permission of Hugh E. O'Rourke. play, and faction fights, which continued in their new surroundings.

Irish rural culture was marked by agricultural violence and by faction fighting, which can in part be explained as recreational fighting. By the early nineteenth century, rural protests became a deep-seated tradition in Ireland. Protestors created secret societies that included semi-military organization, special dress, rituals, secret passwords, codes of behavior, and rituals of intimidation and punishment.³

In the United States in the mid-1800s, Irish immigrants were noted for their clannishness, which was a result of the disadvantages they had faced in Ireland. Antagonisms turned Irish loyalties inward and created an intense local patriotism that centered on regionalism, religion, and family ties.4 The English traveler Frederick Marryat, in notes taken during his trip to the United States in 1837 to 1838, commented on the Irish immigrants: "It would be supposed that, having emigrated to America and obtained the rights of citizens, they would have amalgamated and fraternized to a certain degree with the people; but such is not the case; they hold themselves completely apart and distinct, living with their families in the same quarter of the city and adhering to their own manners and customs. They are just as little pleased with the institutions of the United States as they are with the government at home."5 (italics added)

The Irish in the United States found that they faced injustices similar to those in Ireland. During the 1860s and 1870s, Irish laborers were in the process of organizing a working-class subculture and were on the verge of establishing unions to represent their cause. However, many of their tactics had roots in Irish rural culture. Thus, the organization of coal miners in the anthracite region of Pennsylvania used the faction-fighting and secret-society format that was familiar to the downtrodden Irish workers.

When the coal miners were unable to achieve satisfactory representation by the fledgling Workingman's Benevolent Association (WBA), founded in 1868, they reverted to the secret-society and faction-fight model. The Irish workers had the Ancient Order of Hibernians in their communities. The AOH provided an organization for a primitive union that would be used to formulate attacks against the mine operators. The

workers adopted the name "Molly Maguires" to safeguard the WBA and the AOH. (The Molly Maguires were a secret faction in Ireland that attacked its enemies during agrarian strife.) The Molly Maguires used a style of agrarian violence that originated in north central Ireland between 1760 and 1850. Employing "retributive justice," the Irish struck back at their oppressors in rural Ireland and in industrial America. In Ireland, landlords, their agents, policemen, magistrates, and other farmers were subject to assault, arson attacks, cattle maining, and murder. Many of the same tactics were used in Pennsylvania against mine owners, policemen, municipal officials, and mine superintendents. The Molly Maguires also found that their enemies appeared to be the same English and Protestant antagonists who caused them so many problems in Ireland.6

Historian Charles Tilly (1969) classified collective violence as primitive, reactionary, or modem.7 Primitive violence is most often associated with local people dissociated from a central power. The violence is usually directed against members of rival groups and includes feuds, brawls, and religious rivalries. However, the notion of traditional enemies can be only a pretext for the collective violence. Much of this violence is for "the fun of it," or recreational, and is often present at fairs, funerals, feasts, and other events that bring together local antagonists. It also serves to reinforce group solidarity. Primitive violence is usually nonpolitical and intensely local in objectives and motives. Recreational battling can be considered as a form of team sports in an era before organized athletics. Membership in the group could achieve the goals of physical activity, danger, and excitement.8

While looking for deeper meaning for human activities, more obvious explanations may be the most persuasive. Conley (1999) explained faction fighting as a response to the monotony of rural Irish life. As the legal system tended to turn a blind eye to the activities of the Irish peasantry, faction fighting and recreational brawling flourished. Conley would generally be in agreement with Jack Katz, who examined the relationship between fun, pleasure, and criminal activity. Katz uses the term *seductions of crime* to describe the situational inducements that lead to violence. Fighting is exciting and fulfills personal needs. 10

Rural Irish peasants, without exciting recreational outlets such as sports, used collective violence as a socially sanctioned recreational source.

In contrast to primitive violence, reactionary collective violence involves small groups in conflict with representatives of the powerful. Anticonscription, antitax, anti-land enclosure movements, and Luddite actions are a few of the reactionary and backward-looking forms of violence associated with people attempting to hold onto rights that they fear are in jeopardy. Reactionary collective violence is often directed against the central power or the elites in society. It is political in the broad sense in that it attempts to influence powerful elements in society to allow the less powerful to continue in their traditional manner without interference. Nineteenth-century Ireland experienced a great deal of agrarian violence that was based on attempts to regain or control land as a matter of rights or tradition.

Modern collective violence is usually the most well organized and has the most obvious political or economic purposes. Modern collective violence involves strikes and political demonstrations, which attempt to achieve new rights or powers. Labor issues, temperance, and suffrage movements are typical causes that have resulted in modern collective violence. Many of these demonstrations are mainly shows of force, but they can result in violence, especially when governmental authorities overreact to them.¹¹

CRITICISMS OF IMMIGRANT VIOLENCE

The Irish Emigrant's Guide for the United States, first published in 1849, was an early guide for Irish immigrants. Rev. John O'Hanlon, a pre-Famine immigrant, wrote it as a handbook for the tens of thousands who were fleeing Ireland. Rev. O'Hanlon instructed the immigrant on practical issues such as travel arrangements and employment opportunities. He advised readers to avoid public-works projects and warned them not to involve themselves in factional fighting with men from other parts of Ireland. Apparently, Rev. O'Hanlon had become familiar with a great deal of this behavior in his years in the United States. He cautioned immigrants to avoid associating with provincial factions and to avoid strong alcohol, which led to violence. He was aware of the rivalry that was associated with immigrants

from the various provinces and counties, and of the resultant mindless violence.¹²

The editor of the *Irish American*, P. Lynch, was ever the supporter of the Famine immigrants' cause. In 1850, Joseph Brennan, a correspondent for the *Nation* in Dublin, wrote an article criticiz-

ing the behavior of the newly arrived immigrants and their quick resort to violence as a problem-solving technique. Brennan stated that he assumed that the Irish immigrants would have left behind their age-old antagonisms



and would have improved their behavior as they no longer faced the same stresses. However, he found that "religious bigotry and party feuds have crossed the Atlantic with our people. Our nature has not changed with the clime. We are the same under the 'star-spangled banner' as under the 'union jack." In answering Brennan, Lynch attempted to explain the behavior of the new immigrants: "We do not possess that 'adaptability' which Thierry attributes to the Danes. We everywhere retain our characteristic manners, virtues, and I regret to add, vices." ¹³

The New York press was filled with accounts of strange fights involving the immigrants. Fights could occur over trivial disputes. The *New York Times* in September 1853 reported a Brooklyn fight between a gang of Irish laborers over who was the best street paver.¹⁴

Andrew Leary O'Brien left one of the few immigrant journals from the pre-Famine immigration era. O'Brien was the son of a wealthy farmer in Moileragh, Kanturk, County Cork. He was well educated, and his ambition was to be ordained a Catholic priest. He emigrated in 1837 and enrolled in Chambly College, a seminary near Montreal. However, he did not complete his studies, and he began traveling around the United States. He proved to be a competent mason and found work on the many construction projects then under way.

Illustration: John "Blackjack" Kehoe, the Schuylkill County, PA delegate of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, also known as "The King of the Mollies." Kehoe was executed in 1877.



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[Egg Timpraph.]

Charleson, Friday, Feb. 18.
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A Free Fight twint Corkonians and Fardowners.

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Fifty taken Prisoners.

THE NEW-JERSEY MILITIA CALLED OUT.

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If Irishmen had not many a poor fellow would have died confortably in his bad, who went to the gallows or Van Dieman's Land for life. Coming to America never curse this factions feeling, as every day's repor-

The argument of Saturday came early to a knock-down, and both purious soon being rinferred by tricode, the fighth became general throughout the viring of shantles bordoning on the tannol. In a very short time full fire hundred Jrishmett were caugaged in a most toribly ridth and fight. Towards 8° clock in the evenings, sirash was made for the "shantles," and four of them was easier for the "shantles," and four of them was ease in asies, while four others were as slow pulled down. Stones, britishats, continued to the state of the stat

heedable alsorify, at pose dispatched orders to Gol. Axx. Saraixa, domain-dast of the First Regiment, and to the parties military companies in the filly. Some delay washesperisoned in sending to Nov-Yeri for cartridges, if whith, instrumately, the companies had but a small shiply, but at about 10 o'clock they were delicated to the first. "The following waves the companies had the proceeded to the scrip of the fills." The following waves the companies from Ill-Booking:

Highland Guard, Capt. J. Mars T. Haverda. National Guard, Gayl. G. Van Honten. Hudson Highel Capt. P. W. Bounstrader. Hudson Artillery, Capt. Wa. Haranes. and

When show it salf-way up Bergen Hill, the military halten, at the order of Under-Berilf Jone M. Paancta, to wait until the spounds of a prisoner could be dressed in order to except him to the County Prison, In his journal, O'Brien discussed working on a canal project near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in May 1838. He worked for a masonry contractor in a crew of fellow immigrants from Cork. O'Brien described the deadly rivalry between the Irish workers, who were divided into factions based on geographical regions.

Ireland was, of course, divided into four provinces-Ulster, Munster, Leinster, and Connaught—and was further divided into thirtytwo counties. Workers tended to associate with individuals from their native county or province. Recurring battles occurred between immigrant factions from these various regions. This fact was well known to the contractors, who usually hired entire crews from one of the factions to avoid violence.15

In his journal, O'Brien described the hatred between "Fardowns" and "Corkonians" on his construction project. Corkonians were immigrants from Cork. O'Brien incorrectly identified Fardowns as immigrants from County Kerry and other counties in the southern part of Ireland. In fact, the term Fardown, from the Irish donn ("dark man"), was used to refer to persons from the northern counties of Ulster. It is apparent that the animosities between the two groups were so great that O'Brien had little contact with Fardowns.

O'Brien was candid in admitting that "the cause of this [hatred] I could not satisfactorily discover. I never knew or heard of it till I got on the canal. One of the opposite party dare not seek employment on a contract where the other party were in employ." ¹⁶

O'Brien described instances where one faction would attack a worker from another faction and kill him without any cause, other than that he was a member of an opposing faction. These attacks were daily occurrences, and the huts and tents of the workers required an armed watch at night to prevent attack. The large number of single men on the site and the availability of alcohol, which was dispensed by the contractor, exacerbated the problems.

Violence against laborers from other regions was common in rural Ireland. *Spalpeens*, which is what wandering laborers were called, often faced violence when they arrived in an area at harvest-time. The local laboring population greatly resented the competition, and these seasonal laborers were often attacked.¹⁷

O'Brien left the canal job after five months. He believed that the violence was the result of the Irish laborers themselves. He intended to "never more live where I would be obligated to deal so largely with the lower class of the Irish in this country on public works, where liquor could be had by them at command for I take it, this is their ruin, this is the cause of all their misfortunate proceedings." 18

BERGEN HILL VIOLENCE IN THE FACTION-FIGHTING TRADITION

A series of riots occurred between factions of Irish workers at the Bergen Hill railroad project. The project was undertaken by the Long Dock Company in 1856 and was completed in 1861. The work was the most extensive tunnel undertaking of the time. The tunnel was 4,300 feet long and passed through solid rock.19

A riot between two factions of laborers on Saturday, February 14, 1857, resulted in one death and several serious injuries. At the time, the workers were constructing track about two miles from Hoboken, New Jersey. The violence started in the afternoon of the monthly payday. The twelve hundred Irish workers were reportedly drinking and celebrating payday. Corkonian and Connaught

factions began fighting, and the disorders spread to shanties surrounding the work site. The factions were armed with pistols, rifles, and a variety of crude weapons. Faction fighters entered the shanties of the opposing faction and beat men, women, and children. Several shanties were burned or pulled to the ground.

The sheriff of Hudson County, Henry B. Beatty, responded but he was unable to restore order. Militia units from Hoboken, Jersey City, and Bergen were called to assist the sheriff. Forty-five arrests were made. Eventually, the riot died out, and the sheriff and militia took control. The next day, Sunday, found several thousand visitors to the area who expected to witness another battle. They were not disappointed.

An issue in the conflict was the location of shanties. The Corkonians and the Connaught factions had their temporary dwellings in separate locations. The Corkonians encroached on the Connaught area, and after a period of post-payday drinking early on Sunday, the Connaught men attacked and attempted to drive off the Corkonians. The battle raged from about 1 P.M. to midnight. The New York Times suggested that the riot would have been worse if half of the workers had not been at work in the tunnel. The contractor prevented those at work from entering the affray by drawing up ladders and keeping them in the tunnel.²⁰

Sporadic violence continued among the tunnel workers. Some months after the Bergen Hill riot, on Sunday, August 16, 1857, a large party of intoxicated Irish workers began fighting in Jersey City. The police attempted to stop the battle, but were attacked when the Irish united and turned on them. The police made two arrests.²¹

BERGEN HILL VIOLENCE AND INDUSTRIAL PROTEST

The panic of 1857 caused financial difficulties for the contractor supervising the tunnel project. Monday, September 14, was payday for the twelve hundred tunnel workers. Unfortunately, due to the financial disorders in the money markets, the contractor was able to raise only \$35,000. In addition, the disputes between the Corkonians and Connaught factions continued, and threats of renewed violence were real. The mayor of Hudson City (later part of Jersey City)

met with the contractor and a Catholic priest in an attempt to prevent violence. The president of the New York and Erie Railroad Companies also addressed the workers and explained the problems in the money markets. Drinking by the unemployed workers exacerbated the problem. The *New York Times* suggested that "if liquor could be kept away from them, there is little fear of any outbreak occurring."²²



The financial problems in the United States increased and prevented the adequate financing of the Bergen Hill tunnel. Work was suspended on the project in late September when the contractor could not pay his employees. After having missed a month's wages, more than four hundred of the workers gathered to tear up the railroad tracks of the main line. The treasurer of Hudson City, Jacob Miller, addressed the crowd and promised to help them get their back pay, which amounted to about \$15,000. With that pledge, the workers left the area.²³

Some of the workers left the project and found work elsewhere. The Brooklyn Water Works was at the time constructing the Ridgewood Reservoir. The workers were Irish, and a riot broke out when the company hired some of the laborers from the troubled Bergen Hill Tunnel. The *New York Times* reported that the project manager hired Fardowns from the tunnel project. The *Times* may have been inaccurate, however, as the Fardown faction had not been mentioned in the previous Bergen Hill

Illustration: The Bergen Tunnel, N.J. East, c1890. Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Illustration: (Left)
The New York
Times for February
16, 1857 reported
an "Irish riot"
beween factions at the
Bergen Tunnel worksite where, according
to the newspaper,
"Whiskey flowed
freely...and a 'ruction' was soon
raised."

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NEW YORK IRISH HISTORY

Tunnel riots. The laborers then working on the project objected to the new faction and drove them off the site.24

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The Erie Railroad Blockaded by the Laborers. Stopping the Trains-Delay of the Mails The Military Awalting Orders.

workmen employed on the Bergen Tunnel The workmen employed on the nergen tunes struck for their one month's back wages yesterday morning, and informed the contractor, Mr. Lrman, that they would work no longer until the same was paid, Mr. L., seeing there was trouble ahead, told the men that they were short of money at the nress at time, but that they should have their money the first of next month. This it appears satisfied a portion of the men, who were willing to resume work, but were prevented from so fied a portion of the men, who were willing to resume work, but were prevented from so doing by the others, who declared they should not. Some dissatirfaction arose, and finally the workmen came to the conclusion that unless their wages were paid they would blockade the road at the junction of the Northern Railroad, which branches off from the Erie Road, just back of Bergen Hill. The contractors remonstrated for some time with the nen, but were unable to accomptish any good. Finally, at 10 celock, the workmen, to the any good. Finally, at 11 o'clock, the workmen, to the number of two hundred, proceeded in squads from the contractors' office to the Eric Road, and taking the contractors once to the Eric Ross, and making the dirt-cars used in carrying the dirt and stones from the tunnel, switched them on to the main track, thereby blockading the road. The 12 o'clock way-train from Paterson. N. J., was unable to pass, and all sorts of threats were made by the workmen to the conductor and engineer. The train was compelled to go back and engineer. The train was compelled to go back to Paterson. The Cincinnati Express, due in this city at 2 o'clock, was also compelled to put back to Paterson. The various trains due West proceeded as far as the Slaughterhouse, and could get no further. Atworkmen bld defiance to those who had charge of the The trains were finally compelled to return rsey City. The superintendent of this ditrain. The trains were finally competitud to resurn to Jersey City. The superintendent of this division, Mr. W. Tarton, proceeded to the scene as early as 12 o'clock, but could not accomplish anything. Telegraphic dispatches were sent to the officers of the road, stating the facts, and up to 7 o'clock, mone of them had made their appearance on the money. Cantlemen doing business in this City. the ground. Gentlemen doing business in this City, and residing along the line of the New-York and Erie Road, collected together in groups about the Erie Road, collected together in groups about the Jersey City depôt towards evening, discussing the probability of getting home, &c. All kinds of epi-thets were used against the workmen, and many there were who offered their services to go up and remove the obstruction. Their services, it appears, were not accepted. During the afternoon, word was sent to the Maydr of Hudson City for aid, and he gave orders to the military to turn out. But up to 10 o'clock they had not made their appearance. The Mayor himself appeared on the ground, and told the workmen they were violating the law, but they would not be induenced by anything he said. Word was then sent to Mayor Gracoar, of Jersey City, and that gentleman did all he possibly could to restore order, but failed. The working ran to and fro, swearing they would not remove the cars until they received their wages. The Superintendent, seeing received their wages. The Superintendent, seeing it was impossible to compromise the matter, sent word to Gen. Hatrield, of the Hudson County militia, to send several companies to remove the obstruction

Although the panic of 1857 caused widespread unemployment and economic hardships, the financing of the Bergen Hill tunnel was at least temporarily secure. However, the project again ran out of funds in September 1859. When the workers were not paid their wages on September 15, they struck for one month's back wages and

refused to work until they were paid. The new contractor, A. B. Seymour, promised that they would be paid at the beginning of the next month. An arrangement with Robert H. Berdell, vice president of the Long Dock Company, provided the

At 7% o'clock the crowd increased to all of four hundred, and, notwithstanding the rain, they remained on the ground, shouting like a party of madmen. At ê o'clock the crowd heard that the military were coming, and they immediately supplied themselves with stones and clubs, determined to resist any attempt, that might be made by the military. Word was sent by Col. Gergory, of the Second Regiment, to the Superintendent, that they were in readiness and awaiting the orders of Sheriff Bratti, who, it appears, could not be found. Messengers were sent every hour to that gentleman's residence in Bergen, but he was not there. The Colonel fur-ther remarked that he would not leave the armory the tergen, on he was not these. The Colonel further remarked that he would not leave the armory until orders were received from the Sheriff. Thus matters remained, mud a great many of the passengers came back to this City, while others took up their quarters mode of the cars at the dépôt, expecting that the difficulties would be put to rights by 12 o'clock. At 10 o'clock there was no probability of the obstruction being removed. The crowd still remained, and are apparently bent upon remaining all night. The United States mail was waiting at the Eric Raitroad dépôt, as well as several way trains. The military were still in readiness, waiting the orders of the Sheriff.

Up to 11 P. M., after diligent search, Sheriff Bratty could not be found. A portion of the crowd still remained on the ground, and were bent upon stopping all night. The mail train due in this city at 7:42, and the New-York Express, due at 9:10, were ordered by the Division Superintendent to stop at Sufferns, and proceed to Piernont. This will enable the passengers to arrive in this City sometime during the morning. At 10½ o'clock the military were dismissed from further service. They will in all probability be recalled this 'morning.

CITY POLITICS.

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contractor with \$5,400, which was to be used only for the payment of wages. However, the contractor did not use it to pay the workers.

With that, the workers broke out into a riot and blocked the tracks. Some of the workers were satisfied with a vague promise of a month's wage to be

paid on October 1 and

wanted to resume working. Others were not satisfied and prevented them from returning to the project. A large party of workers blocked the tracks of the Northern and Erie Railroads for three days and prevented trains from passing their barricade. Again, the militia units of Hudson County were called up to deal with the workers. However, Sheriff Beatty of Hudson County could not be found, and without a direct request from him, Colonel Gregory would not leave the armory. Many of the militia members appear to have been less than enthusiastic to act against the strikers. Although the call for the militia was made shortly after the noontime strike, the militia was still not assembled as late as 10 P.M. Eventually only 150 members of the six militia units responded.²⁵

The public and the local governmental officials appeared to have sympathy for the workers. The disappearance of Sheriff Beatty may have been an attempt to avoid acting against the strikers.

The project at this time employed a thousand men. The work was characterized as "of the laborious and exhausting character ...performed underground and when the workers emerge from the different shafts, appear like the laborers in

Illustration: The Times for September 17, 1859 reported another riot at the Bergen Tunnel worksite, this one occasioned by wages that were not paid when the project ran out of funds. Workers barricaded the railroad tracks for three days. The New

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collieries in England coming out of the mines." The workers were paid one dollar a day. If the workers missed any time at work or if the con-

tractor could not pay them, the workers had little reserve to fall back on for relief.26

This inadequate wage Enquirer is TIMES has Presidential was common for unskilled Irish immigrant labor. The great numbers of immigrants lates for the pouring into New York City depressed the wages of both skilled and unskilled labor. The New York Times reported that it would require an annual wage of \$600 for a family of four to live moderately in New York City. However, few workers could earn the \$11.54 weekly wage that would provide this moderate level of comfort. Most laborers and factory workers in New York City earned less than \$5 a week, and few worked without periods of unemployment during the year.27

Newspaper accounts reported other injustices that the workers endured. The contractor established a company store where the workers bought their food and paid for it through a stoppage of wages. The workers complained of poor quality and exorbitant prices. Another problem was the payment of liquor bills out of wages. The boardinghouse keepers provided alcohol to their tenants, payment for which was deducted from the tenants' monthly wages. This practice was stopped by the contractor, who

blamed the poverty of the workers on their abuse of alcohol. The workers, liquor dealers, and boardinghouse operators opposed this action.²⁸

The problem of the company store and the sale of alcohol to the laborers by contractors was widespread. Unscrupulous contractors provided food and supplies at isolated camps at exorbitant prices. Wages were then paid in goods and in alcohol, which were quickly consumed.

A committee of prominent citizens assembled

in Hoboken and of the Bergen Hill a chord among some of the prominent, non-Irish community

Mayor Collard of Hudson City, which with Bergen Hill was incorporated into Jersey City in 1870; various government a Catholic priest, Rev. Vanetta; and local police officers went to the barrifully attempted to get the workers to desist. The mayor read the riot act, but the workers shouted him down. tia moved against the striking rioters, tle, they arrested 45 strikers. Further arrests increased the

arrested on little evidence,

and 39 were quickly dismissed in court.29

security which it

No mention is made of factionalism among the workers. Corkonian, Fardown, and Connaught rivalries were now less relevant, as the industrializing Irish immigrants were confronting a new reality, that of exploited laborers. Casting aside regional differences, the traditional violent

adopted a resolution that was supportive strikers. None of the names of committee members appeared to be Irish. The plight of the workers had struck leaders.

and railroad officials; cades and unsuccess-Eventually, the miliand after a brief battotal to 72. Most were

Illustration: On September 19, 1859, the New York Times reported the use of militia and the police against rioters at Bergen Hill, with no mention of factions. Following a large number of arrests, barricaded tracks were cleared and, the paper stated, order was restored.

The scenes of riot and disorder which took place two years ago, this Fall upon the Eric Raifroad tunnel; at liberger Hill, have been repeated during the past three days, occasioned, as in the former instance, by the failure of the contractor to fuffill his engagements with the workmen by promptly paving them at the time agreed. The custom has been to pay the men monthly. A store was established near the works by Mr. Savwous, the contractor, whence the workmen were permitted to draw is supplies for their families. The alleged inferior quality of the provisions, and he exorbitant prices charged for them, were cause to much dissatisfaction; while the cause of much dissatisfaction; while the cause of much dissatisfaction; while the boarding house keepers kept liquor for sale, which absorbed the earnings of the men, and left their families needy. To prevent this abuse, Mr. Savwour accountly refused to stip the liquor bills out of the wages of the men, and gaye notice that in future he should not paytitem. Whils step naturally excited against him strong opposition among a class of persons who had great influence over the less intelligent portion of the workmen, and when their pay was not forthcoming, they were easily incited to violent measures.

The embarrasaments of the Eric Railroad Company have recently put it out of their power to negotiate the bonds of the Long Dock Company, by which the contractor had been enabled to raise the money with whith to carry on the works; but until recently, whatever other faults have been chargeable to the contractor, the Company appland him, for the energy he has displayed in pushing forward the work of exeavation. About a theysand men are employed, who occupy shantis, near the shafts, in the uniskits of Iludon City. The work is of the most laborious and exhaust, ing characted. It is performed under ground, and the men, when help emerge from the different shafts, appear like the laborers in collicies in Eugland coming out of the minds. Their pay is one dollar per day. Dependent so blish Mr. at alleged or his revas gen-went fo principles that he tion dé-I that he ave the stion he on. The e a great the ques-his entire watches, al and disforthwith

isement s of that e hotels d is the ing conent to an-this week, "—a work hich pos-

response formerly used against agricultural opponents was now the choice of behavior against industrial employers.

The Irish immigrant of the period initially acted according to a cultural tradition that accepted collective violence as both a problemsolving technique and a recreational activity. Collective violence in New York City and the surrounding counties was a continuation of traditional behaviors that were common in pre-Famine Ireland. As the Irish immigrants and their American-born offspring adjusted to life in the city and to the requirements necessary for success in an industrial setting, their traditional behaviors changed. They dropped or modified those behaviors, including recreational rioting, that were incompatible with life in an industrial society. However, some traces of the tradition would continue when confronting modern opponents in the industrial world of the United States.

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- 20. New York Times, February 16, 1857, p. 1, and February 17, 1857, p. 5.
- 21. New York Times, August 18, 1857, p. 5.
- 22. New York Times, September 16, 1857, p. 5.
- 23. New York Times, October 10, 1857, p. 5.
- 24. New York Times, November 12, p. 1.
- New York Times, September 17, 1859, p. 8, and September 19, 1859, p. 4.
- 26. New York Times, September 19, 1859, p. 4.
- 27. In comparison to skilled construction workers, these workers were poorly paid. A Bergen Hill Tunnel worker earning \$1 a day would have at best a weekly wage of \$6. The weekly wages of skilled construction workers in June 1854 were: bricklayer \$14 to \$15, mason \$10, carpenter \$15, plumber \$15, and painter \$15. New York Times, June 20, 1854, p. 4.
- 28. New York Times, September 19, 1859, p. 4.
- 29. New York Times, September 21, 1859, p. 1.