

# *James Irwin; Irish Emigrant Agent, New York City, 1846–1858*

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*Photo:*  
James Irwin. Courtesy  
of the Irwin Family.

During the Great Famine Migration of 1845–1854, more than a million men, women and children fled Ireland, traveled across the Atlantic Ocean and flooded into New York City.<sup>1</sup> Arriving in large numbers, the Irish soon inundated the City’s already inadequate infrastructure.<sup>2</sup> For most, the Quarantine Establishment on Staten Island was the place where immigrants first came into contact with official representatives of their new country.

In 1758, the New York State Legislature had established the Quarantine in response to fears about yellow fever.<sup>3</sup> By 1844, it had evolved into an integral part of the immigration business, a sophisticated bureaucratic money making machine that processed over 50,000 immigrants a year. Friedrich Kapp,

who immigrated to New York in 1850 and later became a Commissioner of Emigration, described it as a “system of legalized robbery, the headquarters of which was city hall.”<sup>4</sup>

During this time, immigrants confronted not only disease and poverty, but also con artists, hustlers and just plain thugs—often called “runners”—who shipping agents and boarding house owners hired to fleece the immigrants. As the historian Terry Coleman noted in *Going to America*, “The purpose of the runners was to rob the emigrants, which they did in four ways. First, by simply stealing whatever luggage could be stolen...second, by seizing luggage, carrying it...to a boarding house, and there demanding with menaces a great fee...third, by taking a cut

from the boarding-house owner for bringing him customers...fourth, by selling river, canal, or railroad tickets to take emigrants to the interior. This was much the most profitable line of business, much more so than stealing heavy trunks containing rags.”<sup>5</sup> What made the runners even more reprehensible was that they were often fellow countrymen who spoke familiar dialects in order to lull the newcomers into a false sense of security.

The business of the runners was often violent. One emigrant advocate testified: “These runners represent the interest of all the various taverns and forwarding lines. Each party [brings] with them their bullies to fight off their opponents, and the emigrant becomes bewildered. As there is frequently bloodshed upon such occasions, the strongest party [carries] off the emigrants.”<sup>6</sup> One of the more notorious forwarding agents, James Roach, kept a party of fighting men called “the sixteen” who were sent out to enforce the more reluctant emigrants.<sup>7</sup> To meet the challenge posed by these runners, wealthy philanthropic immigrant advocates formed “Emigrant Societies” and hired their own agents to do battle with the runners. One of these emigrant agents was James Irwin, a landed proprietor from rural Ireland who shortly after going to America found himself at the point of the spear of the greatest migration in modern history.

#### PRE FAMINE IRELAND AND GOING TO AMERICA

James Irwin was born in County Roscommon in western Ireland in 1803. Irwin was the third son of a wealthy landowner.<sup>8</sup> Not having attended a university or joined the military, Irwin found himself in the unenviable predicament of being a “non-inheriting son.” Since a landowner’s estate was passed down only to the oldest son, “the landowner’s greatest difficulty was in finding suitable employment for his younger sons. The last thing he wanted was to have them hanging about at home with nothing to do but fight, hunt, seduce the tenant’s daughters and discuss speculatively amongst themselves the gaveling clauses of the anti-

Popery acts.”<sup>9</sup> One solution was to become a “middleman.”

When Cromwell invaded Ireland in 1649, he threw out many Catholic landowners and distributed their lands to his supporters back in England, many of whom did not want to move to Ireland. To oversee their new estates, these “absentee landlords” hired displaced members of the Irish upper classes who wanted to maintain their gentrified life-style by living off the difference between the rents they paid and those they received.<sup>10</sup> These “middlemen” had a reputation for hard living and even harder drinking. When they were not managing their landlords’ estates they were hunting and racing their horses about the countryside. In 1827 Jonah Barrington, who was himself a “non-inheriting son” but who had gone to college and later became a judge, wrote a scathing portrait of them:

“They generally had good clever horses, which could leap over anything...and carried large thong whips heavily loaded at the butt end so they were always prepared either to horsewhip a man or knock his brains out as circumstances might dictate. These half mounted gentlemen...exercised hereditarily the authority of keeping the ground clear at horse races, hurlings and all public meetings.”<sup>11</sup> Despite the low esteem in which middlemen were held, since Irwin had no professional training or college education, becoming a middleman was one of his few options.

In 1825 the twenty-three year-old Irwin married Sabina Dowling, the daughter of a wealthy Catholic property owner. That same year he also obtained a lease on a 160-acre estate, *Roundfort*, from an absentee landowner, the Reverend John Hunt.<sup>12</sup> Irwin was now a “landed proprietor” and while he may have shared some characteristics with Barrington’s half mounted gentlemen, such as a love of horse racing and hunting, he was nevertheless expected to make *Roundfort* profitable.

A rather large man for his time, Irwin stood over six feet tall, and contemporaries described him as having a ruddy complexion, blue eyes, black hair, and brown whiskers.<sup>13</sup> Like many landed proprietors, Irwin allowed

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tenants to live on the property in exchange for tilling the land or laboring on the estate. In 1837, a worldwide recession made farming less profitable, and absentee landowners pressured proprietors to evict tenants in order to turn the land over to more profitable uses such as grazing cattle and sheep. The result was that a proprietor literally became a “man in the middle” subject to the constant tension between landowner and tenant, which often erupted into violence.

Between 1826 and 1845, Irwin and his wife, Sabina, produced eight children.<sup>14</sup> Although Irwin was not intimidated by the threat of conflict, as a family man he was concerned by increasing episodes of “agrarian violence” perpetrated against proprietors by secret societies, such as the Molly Maguires.<sup>15</sup> In 1845, frustrated by crop failures and the unrelenting pressure from his absentee landlord and fearing the escalation of violence in Roscommon County, Irwin decided to seek his fortunes in America.

In May 1845, Irwin settled his lease with John Hunt.<sup>16</sup> And, in June, with his family of eleven including his widowed mother-in-law, he left *Roundfort* and began the long journey to America. That week the *Roscommon Journal* reported that “the meadows and the crops

present a luxurious appearance, and never have we witnessed a better prospect of a plentiful harvest.”<sup>17</sup> Only a few weeks later the potato blight appeared and the crops failed, ushering in the infamous Irish Potato Famine.

On July 2, 1845, Irwin and his family set sail from Liverpool on board the *Yorkshire*, one of the fastest packets ever to cross the Atlantic Ocean. After an uneventful voyage, they arrived in New York City on July 30, 1845.<sup>18</sup> Since it was summer, the *Yorkshire* had to anchor off Staten Island in the area known as the Quarantine. Like thousands of other immigrants who arrived that summer, Irwin and his family were examined on board their ship by the City’s Health Officer, Dr. Henry Van Hovenburgh.<sup>19</sup> Just a few weeks earlier, the *New York Tribune* had reported that “Dr. Van Hovenburgh, Health Officer at Quarantine, on Tuesday between sunrise and sunset, boarded vessels having on board 2,687 steerage passengers.”<sup>20</sup> At \$1.50 a head, Van Hovenburgh had become rich running the Quarantine. But as the *Yorkshire* sat in the Quarantine that hot July morning, in addition to the doctor, the ship was also boarded by Mr. Bartholomew Hart, the Quarantine Agent of the Irish Emigrant Society.

The Irish Emigrant Society was formed, in

Scene at the Irish Emigrant Office in Ann street.

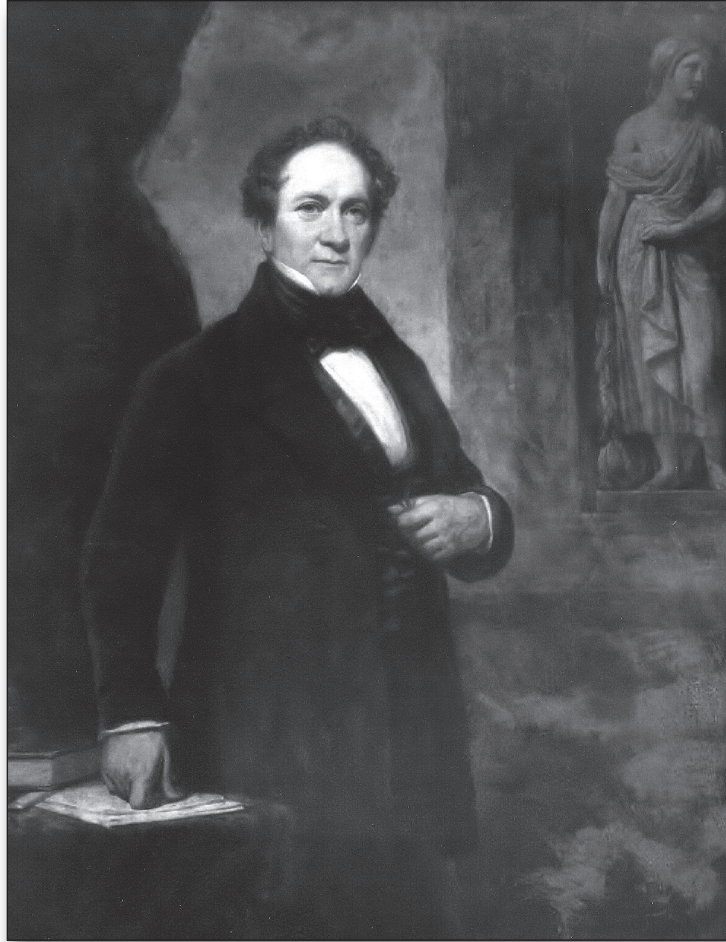


**Illustration:**

Scene outside the office of the Irish Emigrant Society, New York Weekly Herald, July 12, 1845. Courtesy of the Corvis/Bettman Archives.

1841, as an outgrowth of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick, a social and political organization that included several aging rebels from the failed Irish Rebellion of 1798.<sup>21</sup> Unlike the Friendly Sons, which had a political agenda, the goals of the Irish Emigrant Society were philanthropic. Two weeks earlier, a front page story in the *New York Weekly Herald* stated that in contrast to other political groups, the society's focus was "solely on the welfare of the friendless emigrant."<sup>22</sup> The society afforded advice, provided information about the whereabouts of relatives and friends, and helped to find employment. Most importantly, the Irish Emigrant Society also offered protection by hiring its own agents to combat the nefarious runners.

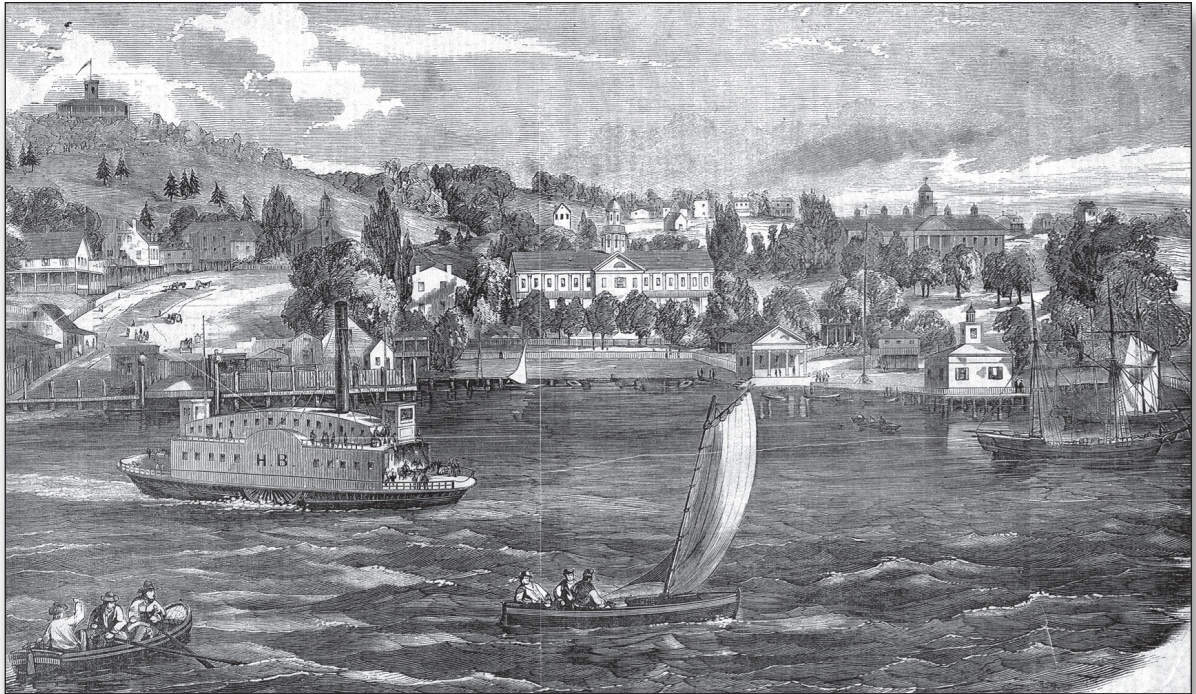
Bartholomew Hart had already learned that being the outdoor agent of the Irish Emigrant Society was not for those who avoided confrontation. Shortly after he had been hired that spring, Hart was involved in an assault at the Quarantine and the Society had to intervene with the Health Officer to restore good relations.<sup>23</sup> Only a few weeks later, in July 1845, Hart again was involved in a conflict this time over the ferries that had been sanctioned by Van Hovenburgh to take immigrants into the city. The ferries were a constant source of abuse for immigrants. One ferry captain when asked why he had abandoned 200 immigrants to stand in the rain overnight at the Quarantine Dock had replied: "They are as well off there as in the city."<sup>24</sup> Hart had complained to the Executive Committee of the Irish Emigrant Society that "many inconveniences arise from the steamer *Gazelle* carrying off passengers from the Block at the



**Illustration:**  
Gregory Dillon (1782–1854) who left Jamestown, County Roscommon, after the 1798 rebellion, was the first president of the New York City based Emigrant Industrial Savings Bank, as well as president of the Irish Emigrant Society. Courtesy of the Archives of Irish America, New York University.

Quarantine ground at unreasonable hours."<sup>25</sup> Thomas W. Clerke, President of the Irish Emigrant Society, met with Van Hovenburgh at the Health Officer's City Hall office and tried to persuade the doctor to intervene. But Van Hovenburgh declined. The steamers were just too large a part of his business.<sup>26</sup> Hart was told he would have to go take care of the problem himself.<sup>27</sup>

The job of the outdoor or quarantine agent was to board vessels at the Quarantine and give information to the immigrants.<sup>28</sup> When Hart boarded the *Yorkshire* on July 30, 1845, he gave Irwin and his family a number of pamphlets and directions to the offices of the Irish Emigrant Society in downtown Manhattan. According to a writer for the *New York Weekly Herald*, the offices of the Society were easy to locate "by the crowds of persons standing about the door, sitting on the neighboring doorsteps, or strolling within



**Illustration:**  
View of the Quarantine from the Quarantine Block. A Manhattan bound ferry is leaving Staten Island while piraguas visiting the ships in the Quarantine are in the foreground. The Fever Hospital is in the center, while the Yellow Fever Hospital is to the upper right. A ship, with a tall mast, is anchored at right. From Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, September 11, 1858. Author's Collection.

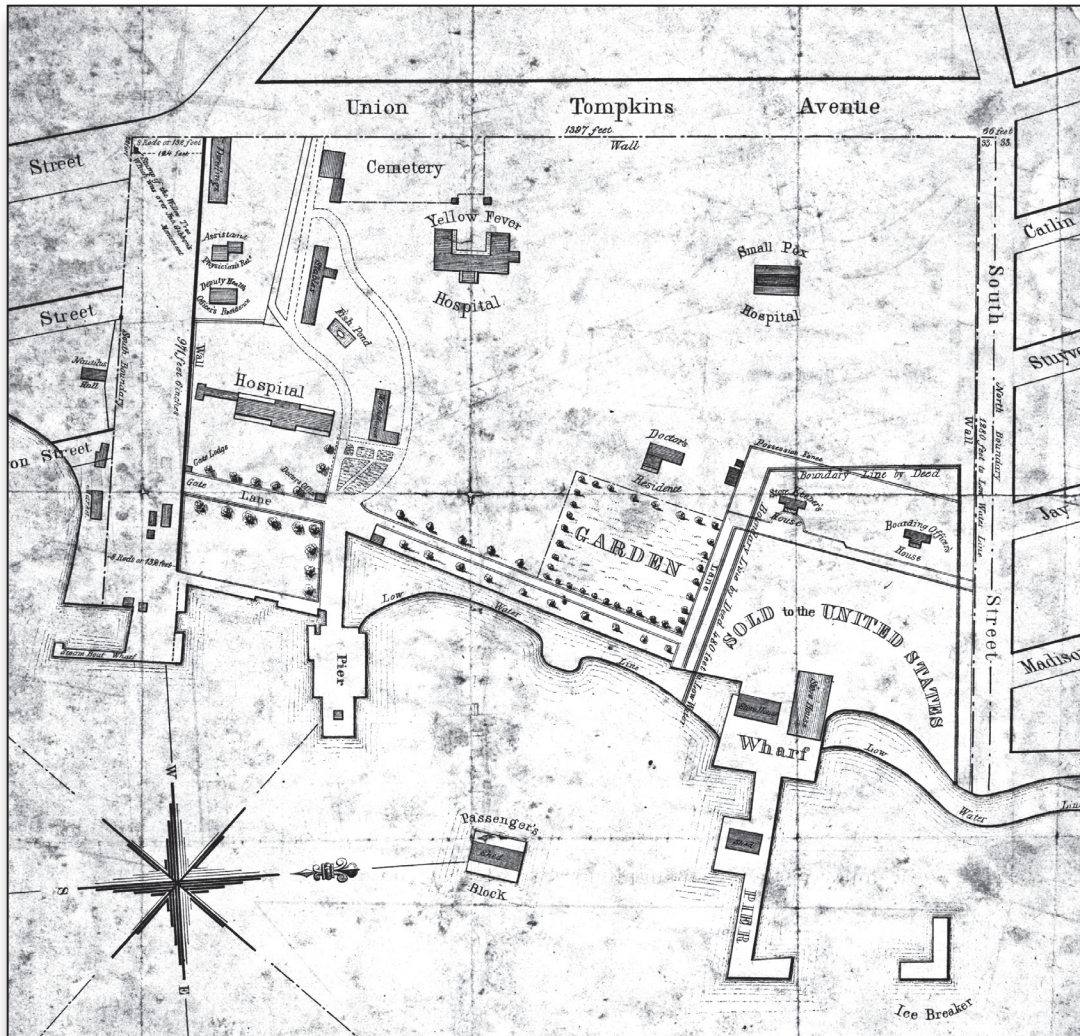
point-blank distance with their hands in their breeches pockets—the favorite posture of the loose and ready boys of the green isle.”<sup>29</sup> Located in the shadow of P.T. Barnum’s famous museum at the corner of Ann Street and Broadway, the offices were conveniently situated near City Hall Park. Once inside the office, Irwin met Gregory Dillon, the man who was to set the course of the rest of his life.

Gregory Dillon, the vice president of the society, had been born and raised only five miles southwest of Roundfort. At eighteen years old, Dillon and his brother had participated in the unsuccessful United Irish rebellion of 1798, and had been forced to leave Ireland. Dillon had worked hard to establish himself in his new country. During the War of 1812, he served with New York’s First Regiment. Afterwards, he moved to Augusta, Georgia, where he became a successful merchant. In the 1830s when he returned to New York, he was a wealthy man, and he became engaged in variety of philanthropic interests including the Irish Emigrant Society.

Dillon was taken with Irwin and his family. Re-iterating the Society’s philosophy that immigrants would be more successful if they left the city and headed west, Dillon urged Irwin to seek his fortune near Chicago,

Illinois. Irwin followed Dillon’s advice, and during his journey up the Hudson River by steamboat, and then over to the Great Lakes by canal, Irwin observed first hand many of the abuses inflicted by shipping agents on immigrants as they traveled to the Midwest. Whether Irwin arrived in Illinois too late to start an “agricultural venture” is not known, but after only a short time in Chicago, he and his family returned to New York City in the late winter or early spring of 1846.<sup>30</sup>

Upon his return to New York City, Irwin immediately sought out Dillon for help with finding work. Irwin’s timing could not have been better. Bartholomew Hart, the agent who had greeted the Irwins the previous summer, had been dismissed during the winter. Although there had been several applicants for the job, Gregory Dillon suspected that Irwin’s background and experience would come in useful in dealing with runners and unruly boarding-house keepers. As a former landed proprietor, Irwin had the social skills to successfully interact with established power brokers like Dillon, while as a former “half mounted gentleman” Irwin was not above getting his hands dirty “keeping the grounds clear at public gatherings.” When the Society’s executive committee met on April 3, 1846,



Gregory Dillon, “the Chairman of the Committee to appoint an Agent for the Quarantine for the coming year, reported the name of Mr. Irwin as fit and suitable for that situation” at a salary of \$30.00 a month and ferriage.<sup>31</sup>

**PRE- FAMINE QUARANTINE AGENT, 1846**

Although the potato blight had a significant impact on the 1845 harvest, the response of relief efforts successfully staved-off widespread starvation.<sup>32</sup> The spring and summer of 1846 saw an increase in the total number of immigrants, but it had not overwhelmed the process. As the outdoor agent, Irwin’s daily routine included checking in at the office to determine which ships had arrived in Quarantine, and getting reports on which boarding-houses had caused trouble the night

before. Then, after collecting his logbook in which he would record which ships and boarding houses he visited along with any complaints and their resolutions, he walked the few blocks from City Hall Park down to the Battery and boarded a ferry for Staten Island. A town had grown up around the ferry landing on Staten Island and a six-foot-high brick wall surrounded the Quarantine. In order to enter the Quarantine, Irwin had to check in with the gate-keeper who would then arrange with the Health Officer’s boatmen to take him on a piragua to visit the ships anchored off shore.

In 1846, the Quarantine Establishment consisted of thirty acres situated on a steep hill dominated by three prominent brick hospitals. A long, three-story “fever hospital” was situated near the water and had porches and verandas

**Illustration:**  
 Map of the Quarantine, 1845. The Passenger’s Block is in the bottom center; the doctor’s residence fronts the large garden. In 1845 the ferry landed at the Steam Boat Wharf, to the center left, just above the compass point. Today the ferry lands to the bottom right at the foot of South Street. Courtesy of the Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

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At a meeting of the Executive Committee held  
 Present Friday April 3<sup>rd</sup> 1846  
 Mr. Clarke The President in the Chair  
 Mr. Dillon Mr. Shea as Sec<sup>y</sup> pro tem read the minutes of last meeting  
 Mr. Sheehan which were on motion adopted  
 Mr. Swanwick The President read a Communication from Mr. Samuel  
 Mr. Doyle Ewing which was ordered on file & the matter thereof  
 Mr. Howell referred to the Monthly Committee  
 Mr. Boland The Chairman of the Committee to appoint an  
 Mr. Manning Agent for the Quarantine for the next year ~~reported~~  
 Mr. Navy reported the name of Mr. Irwin as a fit and suitable  
 Mr. Shea person for that situation  
 Moved & Seconded that the Salary of the out-door  
 agent be fixed at \$30 per month and ferriages  
 Moved that the report of the Committee be accepted  
 and the Committee discharged  
 Mr. Sheehan nominated Mr. Haynes for the same office  
 of out-door agent on taking the question Mr. Irwin was  
 appointed to the place - and the arrangements with him  
 were ordered to be made with the Committee.  
 Moved & Seconded that a Committee of three be appointed  
 by the Chair to select a suitable Office Agent to succeed  
 Mr. Bulkley on the first day of May next or sooner if  
 the Committee consider it necessary - The question being  
 put the motion was carried  
 Messrs Swanwick, Dillon, and Shea, were appointed  
 such Committee  
 Moved that a Committee of three be appointed to  
 draw up with the assistance of the Office agent a full  
 report of the business transactions of the Society for  
 the last year. Messrs Doyle, Shea & Swanwick were  
 appointed such Committee  
 There being no further business before the Committee  
 it on motion  
 Adjourned J. W. E. Shea

**Illustration:**  
 Page from the Minute  
 Book of the Irish  
 Emigrant Society for  
 April 3, 1846. On  
 this day, James Irwin  
 was hired as the  
 outdoor or quarantine  
 agent. From Emigrant  
 Savings Bank  
 Records, Manuscripts  
 and Archives  
 Division, The  
 New York Public  
 Library, Astor Lenox,  
 and Tilden  
 Foundations.

from which patients could enjoy the fresh air. Another, larger three-story "Yellow Fever Hospital" had a prominent cupola capped with a statue of a sailor looking out to sea, a reminder that this had been the original Marine Hospital. Further up the hill sat a smaller "Small Pox Hospital." In addition to the hospitals, there were residences for the Health Officer, his assistant physicians, the steward, a farmer, and six houses for bargemen.<sup>33</sup> During

the winter, when few ships arrived, two of the hospitals were closed; even in summer the hospitals were rarely full.<sup>34</sup>

Irwin quickly discovered that within the Quarantine establishment, the Health Officer was lord and master. Not only did the gatekeeper have to clear all visitors with the Health Officer, but every ship's captain had to check with Van Hovenburgh. In addition, every small vessel such as a lighter or barge or ferry

At a meeting of the Executive Committee  
November 9<sup>th</sup> 1846.  
The President in the chair.

Present:  
Messrs Dillon  
Ingoldby  
Donnelly  
Kelly  
Manning  
Galy  
Thea.  
O'Connor  
Mr. Carthy

A Communication was received from a passenger onboard the Ship Europe on her late voyage from Liverpool to this City, complaining of the accommodations and treatment of the passengers referred to the President and Messrs. Daly & Mr. Carthy with full powers.

On Motion it was resolved that a Committee be appointed to investigate the numerous charges made by persons against John Kerdman & Co and others for not paying over monies received by them for drafts to send to parties in Ireland Passage money, &c &c with power to publish the particulars of the same in such papers as they think proper. The President the monthly committee and Mr. Carthy were appointed.

On motion it was resolved that the Secretary be instructed to draw a warrant on the Treasurer for thirty two Dollars, to be paid to Mr. Mr. Carthy for transmission to Stephen Druffy of Troy to replace same amount lost or stolen from a letter heretofore sent to said Druffy. Adjourned.

**Illustration:**

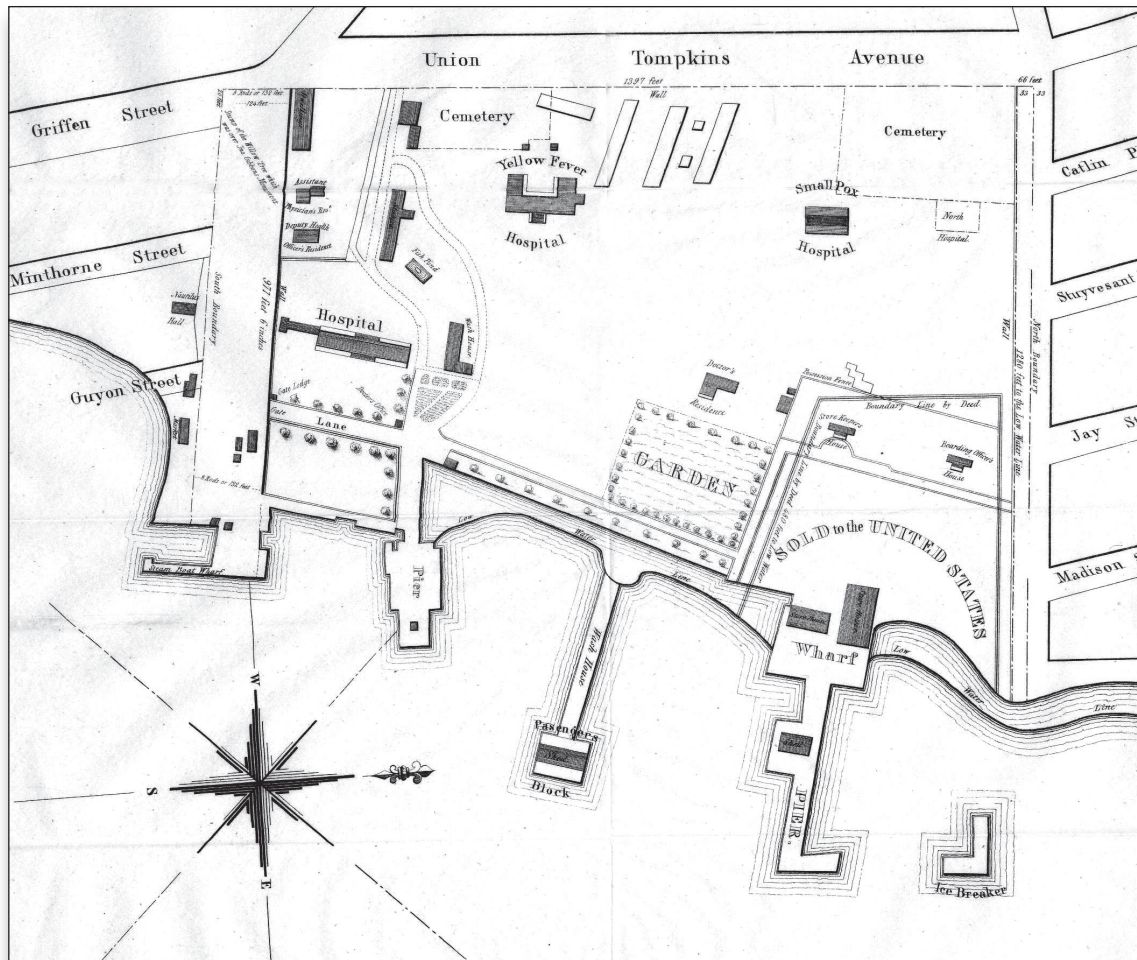
Page from the Minutes of the Emigrant Society for November 9, 1846, in James Irwin's handwriting. As Office Agent, Irwin was responsible for keeping "The Order Book, the Applicants Book, the Day Book, the Daily Journal, Ticket Book, and the Minute Book." Only the Minute Book has survived. From the Emigrant Savings Bank Records, The Manuscript and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

that wanted to transport passengers from the Quarantine to the city also had to be cleared by the Health Officer or his staff.<sup>35</sup> For years the city had levied a fee on every immigrant, especially those who were healthy. Paid to the Health Officer, these fees were supposed to cover the expenses of those who were sick. A City Hall clerk was responsible to keep track of the fees paid, but records were poorly kept and corruption was rampant. As a result, the

Health Officer was one of the most lucrative political jobs in New York.<sup>36</sup>

Irwin soon learned that being the Quarantine Agent for the Irish Emigrant Society could be a violent occupation. In May 1846 Irwin boarded the British sailing ship *Leitia Haynes* at the Quarantine, "for the purpose of giving the Irish immigrants the necessary advice and information... when he was violently interrupted and opposed by the mate





**Illustration:**  
 Map of Quarantine, 1849. Note the changes since 1846 (see preceding map). New hospitals have been constructed above the Yellow Fever Hospital, the Passenger Block is connected to the shore by a pier and a new cemetery can be seen to the upper right. A new cemetery can be seen in the upper right which is the site of the new memorial park on Staten Island. From "Communication from the Committee Appointed by the House of Assembly at its last Session," New York State Assembly Doc. 60 (Albany, 1849). Courtesy Countway Library of Medicine, Harvard University.

who ordered him ashore." According to newspaper accounts, "Mr. Irwin showed his credentials, and offered to leave and asked for a boat to take him back to shore, but the mate refused and ordered Mr. Irwin to be thrown overboard, and proceeded to drag him towards the forward part of the vessel, and would he believes, have executed his threat, but for the direct interference of the passengers." After a steamer took Irwin back to the city, he went to the offices of the Society who had the mate arrested and thrown in jail overnight at the Tombs. The mate was subsequently released and no formal charges were filed. The Irish Emigrant Society complained to the Executive Committee of Prisons that the magistrate had refused to hear the case. In what was to become a recurrent theme for those who opposed the Irish Emigrant Society, the magistrate accused Irwin of being a troublemaker, stating that "it was a mere rivalry between pas-

senger agents and brokers, and that they must not expect the police to interfere in their squabbles."<sup>37</sup>

Throughout the summer of 1846, Irwin continued to board incoming ships, visit boarding houses, and undermine the activities of unscrupulous runners. For thousands of Irish immigrants, James Irwin was the first friendly face they met when they arrived in America. Meanwhile, the society was trying to improve its organization to more efficiently handle the increasing demand for its services. The original charter for the society stated that it was incorporated for the purpose of affording "advice, information, aid and protection to Emigrants from Ireland,"<sup>38</sup> but by far the Society's most significant activity was helping immigrants send money back to Ireland.<sup>39</sup> While the handling of remittances was not a problem for successful merchants like Dillon and the other wealthy members of the

Executive Committee, money would increasingly be a problem for the Society's financially naïve agents.

In July 1846, the Irish Emigrant Society's Office Agent, who had only been on the job a couple of months, failed to accurately account for the money in petty cash and he was summarily dismissed.<sup>40</sup> Gregory Dillon asked Irwin if he was interested in the job, and in August, Irwin became the Office Agent for the Society.<sup>41</sup> While Irwin's timing in obtaining the position of Outdoor Agent might have been impeccable, his timing in becoming Office Agent could not have been worse. In August 1846, Ireland's potato crop failed again. This time, the impact on immigration was immediate and catastrophic.

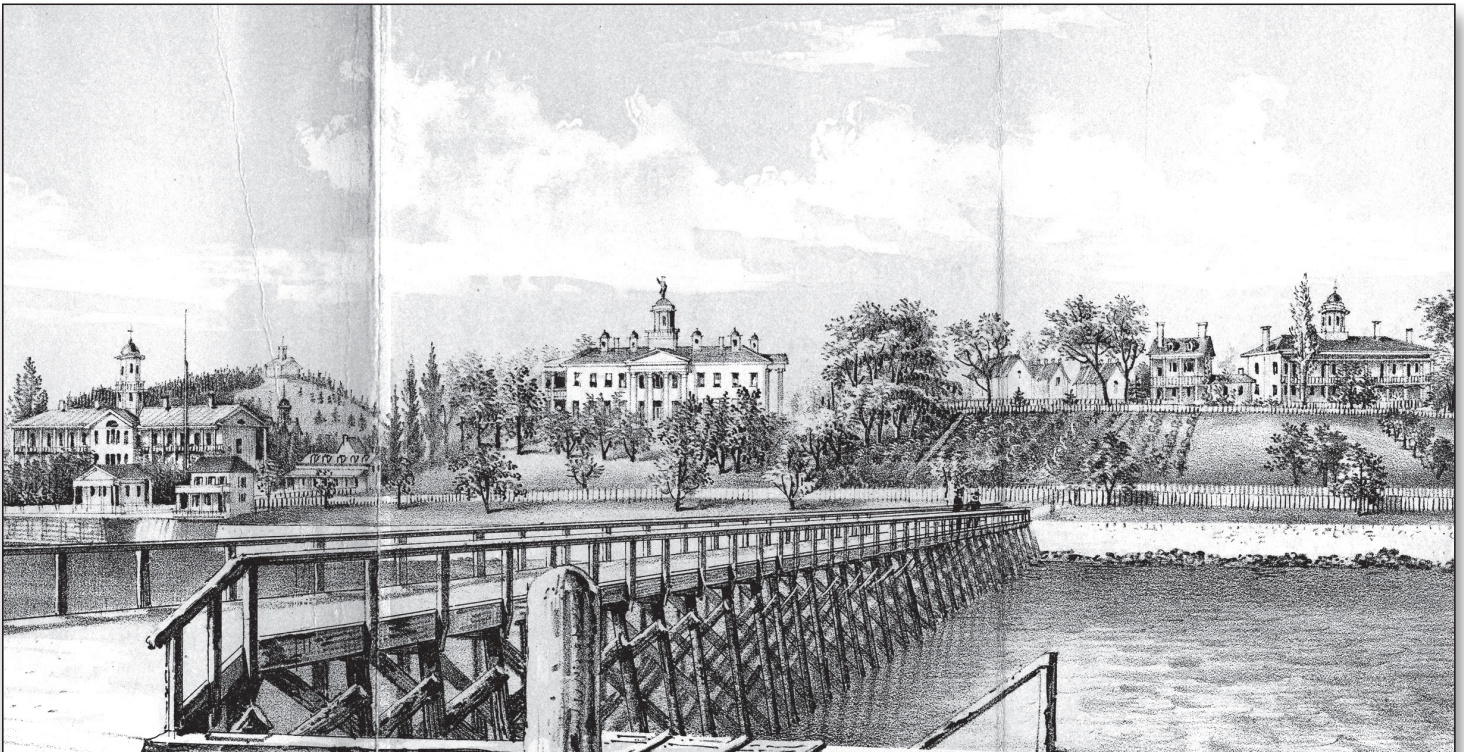
#### BLACK '47 OFFICE AGENT

On the evening of August 3, 1846, Mr. Cooper, a resident of Markree Castle in County Sligo, in western Ireland, observed "a most singular cloud resembling a thick fog" extending over the east of the Ox Mountains. "It differed from a common fog in being dry instead of moist, and in having, in almost every instance, a disagreeable odour. That same

evening the blight fell upon the whole side of the mountain."<sup>42</sup> Soon it was clear that the potato crop in Ireland had failed for a second year in a row. This time the results would be devastating. While the previous year's crop failure had been partial, the failure of 1846 was nearly total. The relief efforts in 1845 were considered successful; however, the failure of the British government's relief efforts in 1846 was almost criminal. It was now a certainty that many in Ireland would starve during the coming winter and that an international disaster was developing.<sup>43</sup>

The impact of the famine on New York City was immediate as the pattern of immigration changed. Rather than waiting for summer to board a modern packet ship to cross a relatively calm Atlantic, immigrants embarked on any kind of vessel that could get them out of Ireland.<sup>44</sup> In addition, landlords began clearing their lands by enforcing a policy of forced emigration which funneled hundreds of starving tenants onto ships contracted at minimum prices. This meant sailing in overcrowded and substandard ships with inexperienced captains and crews who tried to cross the stormy North Atlantic during winter. Immigrants, already

**Illustration:**  
View of the Quarantine from the Quarantine Dock. The Fever Hospital is to the left, the Yellow Fever Hospital (with the statue of a sailor on the roof) is in the center, and the Small Pox Hospital is to the far right. From Valentine's Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York (New York, 1859).  
Author's Collection.



malnourished and sick, found themselves on ships with inadequate provisions and no medical care. In a single season thousands of passengers perished on what came to be known as “famine ships.”<sup>45</sup> Those immigrants who survived and made it to New York, especially the very young and very old, were often sick and needed medical attention. It was not long before the newly arrived overwhelmed the hospitals at the Quarantine.

The first of the “famine ships” began appearing in New York during the fall and winter of 1846–1847. In January 1847, over 4,000 immigrants arrived at the Quarantine.<sup>46</sup> This figure was far above the number seen in any of the previous winters. As the historian John Duffy indicates, “although the three quarantine hospitals had only 850 beds, during one nine month period the admissions totaled 7,000,” forcing the construction of haphazard shanties and mass graves at the Quarantine. Many immigrants, who made it out of quarantine after their initial exam, fell sick soon afterwards and were admitted to the city’s hospitals and almshouses taxing those facilities as well. The death rate from typhus or “ship fever” throughout the city reached epidemic proportions.<sup>47</sup>

In New York, the Irish Emigrant Society office became a crisis center for the Irish community. Many of the State’s most influential citizens came to visit Gregory Dillon and the other members of the society to strategize a response to the crisis in Ireland. Collecting and sending money back to Ireland became a priority and the volume of transactions flowing through the office increased. Occupying a particularly critical position in the office during this time was James Irwin, who as Office Agent was essentially the office manager. He supervised the other agents, kept track of all correspondence, recorded minutes of meetings, and most importantly, managed the flow of cash through the office.

The offices at 6 Ann Street were inadequate to handle the increasing crowds of immigrants, and in the spring of 1847, the Society moved two blocks away to larger accommodations at 22 Spruce Street. James Irwin and the

Irish Emigrant Society continued to try to provide what help they could to the throngs of sick and destitute immigrants who sought their help, while city officials continued to thwart the system. In the first eleven months of 1846, there were over 100,000 arrivals but less than \$10,000 was collected because of the corrupt and ineffective management of the immigrant traffic.<sup>48</sup> Gregory Dillon and other emigrant advocates lobbied both the city and state for tighter regulation over the runners and their employers, but corrupt city officials resisted reform. Finally, in the spring of 1847, Gregory Dillon and his colleague, Andrew Carrigan, were successful in getting the state legislature to pass an act establishing the Commissioners of Emigration. Their duty was to take over all aspects of immigration including the Quarantine.<sup>49</sup> As a compromise to those who had opposed any reform, the membership of the Commission was composed of politicians, ship owners, and the presidents of two of the emigrant societies. This arrangement almost guaranteed future controversies surrounding the Commission’s management.

Given the volume of transactions that were taking place during this period, it was inevitable that Irwin would fall behind in his bookkeeping. In the summer of 1847, he was accused of not keeping an accurate account of the petty cash. Although an investigation cleared him of any wrong-doing, he was removed as Office Agent.<sup>50</sup> Since Irwin had already demonstrated his effectiveness to the society as their outdoor agent, with Gregory Dillon’s support he was re-assigned to his former position.

In the early summer of 1847, when Irwin returned as outdoor agent to the Quarantine, he hardly recognized the place. The sweet smell of sickness hung over the compound. Emaciated men and women lay on the ground outside hastily constructed and already overcrowded temporary hospitals. A pier had been extended out to the passenger dock to make it easier to carry litter patients ashore. Recently dug burial trenches lined the northwest corner of the compound to handle the hundreds of dead from what has come to be known as “Black ’47.”<sup>51</sup>



The Commissioners of Emigration now controlled the Quarantine and the Health Officer no longer had any authority except within the hospital. This left a power vacuum which only aggravated the competition among boatmen and runners for transporting healthy immigrants into the city. Irwin continued to be aggressive in combating the runners. In August, the Society filed a complaint against “Cornell and others for assault and battery on board the steam boat *Hercules* with full power to prosecute.”<sup>52</sup>

The establishment of the Commissioners of Emigration was an attempt to gain control over the abuses of the runners, but with the runners’ employers sitting as Commissioners,

progress was slow at best. The adversarial relationship between the runners and the emigrant agents had always been tense. Allegations flew back and forth that the Society’s agents were no different than the runners they were hired to oppose. James Roach, one of the most notorious of the shipping agents, stated that “it is the general opinion among forwarding houses that the agents of all the emigrant societies are engaged in forwarding passengers, and most of the emigrant forwarding houses try to get their influence.”<sup>53</sup> This was to become a recurring issue in a system where the laws were vague and the potential for graft was great. Proving or disproving the conflicting claims often was an exercise in futility.

On October 27, 1847, Irwin was called to testify before a committee that had been set up by the State of New York to investigate the “frauds and impositions upon foreign immigrants arriving in this state.” Irwin was unequivocal in his denial that emigrant agents were in collusion with forwarding companies:

*James Erwin [sic] sworn. I am agent of the Irish Emigrant Society of the city of New-York. The books produced before the committee are the books of the society. One of them is the book of arrivals; the other is the complaint book, in which is entered the complaints made to the society by emigrants, all which of is in my hand writing. I have investigated all of the cases entered in the book. I do not know of any person connected with any emigrant societies are connected with any forwarding offices.*<sup>54</sup>

The committee declined to enter Irwin’s complaint book into the record, stating that

**Photo:**

*A temporary cemetery placard marks the location of the Irwin family grave site in Queens’ Calvary Cemetery. Author’s Collection.*

their report was “already too voluminous, and quotations would be more repetitions of what has already been mentioned.” It did however cite the case of Anne Steele who had been robbed while staying in a boarding house. Irwin had been sent as outdoor agent to investigate but was unsuccessful in getting the boarding house owner to reimburse the young immigrant.<sup>55</sup>

In April 1848, the state legislature passed a sweeping law to regulate the immigration business. Runners and boarding house keepers would now be licensed, and the Commissioners of Emigration were authorized to appoint their own outdoor agents or inspectors “to board vessels from foreign ports at the quarantine ground...for the purpose of advising such emigrants, and putting them on their guard against fraud and imposition.”<sup>56</sup> The Irish Emigrant Society had already begun to cut back on its non-financial services, and was well on its way to transitioning into what it is today, a bank. It was only a matter of time before the Society’s own “outdoor agent” would be phased out. At the September 22, 1848 meeting of the Executive Committee of the Irish Emigrant Society, it was directed that “the office of the outdoor agent be vacated after the 1<sup>st</sup> day of November and Mr. Irwin be notified.”<sup>57</sup>

Irwin, however, was barely affected. Gregory Dillon, who was a Commissioner of Emigration himself, was not about to let go of one of his most trusted agents and it was not long before Irwin was working for Dillon again, but now as an agent of the Commissioners of Emigration.

#### COMMISSIONERS OF EMIGRATION AGENT

The establishment of the Commissioners of Emigration in 1847 and the subsequent law of 1848 regulating the immigrant business came at a time when the number of immigrants increased dramatically. The famine in Ireland continued to bring misery and starvation to the Irish people, while the failed political revolutions of 1848 drove thousands of Germans to leave Europe. According to a state committee report, “The number of passengers

who arrived at the port of New-York, and for whom commutation money was paid, in the year 1848, was 189,176; in the year 1849, the number reported was 220,603; in the year 1850, the number liable to bonds, was 212,796; and in the year 1851, the number was swelled to 289,601.”<sup>58</sup> Unfortunately, the Commission did not have the resources to take proper care of all those who needed help, and it struggled to procure adequate buildings, food, and other necessities to handle the incredible number of people seeking assistance. Some critics charged the Commission was inefficient in handling its money.

Regardless, the Commission was hard pressed to demonstrate any significant improvement in the services it provided compared to the system it was attempting to replace. The intrinsic conflict of interest in the organization of the Commission almost guaranteed there would be confusion and continued corruption and abuse. Runners were now required to be licensed, which, in effect legalized their unethical behavior. As the Commissioners tried to apply increasing pressure on the runners, the forwarding companies and boarding house owners who sponsored the runners began a campaign to push back against the Commissioners and their employees, including Irwin.

In response to the political pressure applied by the forwarding agents, yet another committee was convened by the State Assembly to investigate an allegation that the Commissioners “have exercised unfairness and partiality in the discharge of their duties towards runners, forwarders, boarding house keepers, and contractors...and that their subordinates employed to advise emigrants on their arrival, and others in the employ of the Commissioners, have been in collusion with and under pay by those against whose imposition, if any, they had been appointed to guard emigrants.”<sup>59</sup> In *Going to America*, Terry Coleman noted that the investigating committee was “full of dubious witnesses exonerating themselves and accusing the others.”<sup>60</sup> He described one of these “dubious witnesses,” Charles Gallagher, as someone who was “mak-

ing allegations of corruption against all and sundry.”<sup>61</sup> Gallagher testified that, “I have seen a contract made by Mr. Hinds (a shipping agent with close ties to the President of the British Emigrant Society) where he agreed to pay...Mr. Irwin, attached to the Irish Emigrant Society office, 22 Spruce Street... Mr. Irwin has recommended passengers to me, and I have paid him for it. This fact...I reported to some of the commissioners, to John E. Devlin and I think to G. Dillon.”<sup>62</sup> Another runner, Charles Cook, testified that he also saw a contract whereby Irwin would get \$80.00 to be split with the clerks in the Irish Emigrant Society for sending emigrants to the firm of Wilkie and Hinds.<sup>63</sup> The law of 1848 specifically proscribed against agents of the Commission taking money for their services, but at the time Gallagher and Cook were referring to Irwin was still employed by the Society, which had no such proscriptions. Another forwarding agent, Isaiah Selover, testified that the clerks in the Commissioners’ office (James Irwin and James Fagan) would send immigrants to John Allen a rival forwarder.<sup>64</sup> Fagan, who was later the lead agent for the Commission testified, “I was in the habit of recommending passenger’s to Mr. Allen’s Office; I was directed to recommend passengers to Mr. Allen’s office by the commissioners because he forwarded them at the lowest rate.”<sup>65</sup> The Investigating Committee ultimately decided that “a perusal of the testimony in the case of Irwin will show that there is not sufficient (evidence) to maintain the charge as to him while in the employ of the Commission.” Although dealing with runners was just as nasty as it had always been, Irwin was about to become involved in an even more unpleasant aspect of the immigrant business.

With the flood of immigrants making their way into the city, the original office of the Commissioners of Emigration near City Hall quickly became inadequate. This was particularly true in the winter when freezing temperatures made finding suitable shelter imperative. Hundreds of immigrants, denied access to the already overcrowded Emigration Office, would gather in City Hall Park and threaten to riot.<sup>66</sup>

The *New York Herald* sent an undercover reporter to investigate the situation.<sup>67</sup> In response to pressure from the press, temporary shelter was found for the “houseless and homeless wanderers.” James Irwin must have made a good impression on the reporter for he was singled out for his kindness. The *Irish American Weekly* reported that “a humane, most intelligent and able assistant (Mr. Irwin) is now to be found at the Emigration Office using the mildness of a christian and the language of a gentleman...where before were employed brutality and vulgarity.”<sup>68</sup>

But the solution was only temporary. In December 1850, the Commissioners purchased two large buildings at the northern edge of the Five Points neighborhood to serve as a “Labor Exchange and Information Service.” The five story buildings on Canal Street sat in the shadow of the huge New York and New Haven Railroad Depot and had once housed a carriage business. Originally the Labor Exchange was intended to function as an employment agency similar to the role the Irish Emigrant Society had fulfilled. Unfortunately, when the Labor Exchange opened for business on February 7, 1851, it was the middle of winter and there was not much work to be found. Hundreds of men, women, and children crowded into the rooms at Canal Street and ended up staying several days and nights. According to a New York State report, “Emigrants temporarily relieved there...are quartered in rooms comparatively remote from the street, up narrow stair ways, without bannisters in some instances, through different rooms; the buildings themselves being dilapidated to some extent, and being shut in on the rear by houses or enclosures, so as to prevent egress on that side, while the locality of these buildings is one most liable to destructive fire.”<sup>69</sup> On some nights, there were over 1,500 crammed into buildings that should have had no more than 500.

Not all the immigrants were innocent people looking for a better life. Some were criminals and there was often mayhem and fighting, especially if alcohol was involved. Irwin, who in addition to being an agent was also assigned as

a clerk at the Exchange, found himself in the uncomfortable position of having to maintain order, not against runners but against some of the immigrants he had signed on to help. Allegations were made that the clerks of the Commissioners were too harsh, and that some went around brandishing whips, but the investigating committee concluded that “no more physical force should ever be used in such establishments than may be necessary and reasonable to ensure proper decorum and the observance of established regulations.”<sup>70</sup>

Then, in January 1852, tragedy struck. In order to accommodate the ever-increasing numbers of people in the winter, the Commissioners were putting up immigrants in several buildings near the Exchange, including one at the corner of Canal Street and Center Street. On Saturday, January 10, 1852 over 450 men, women, and children were crowded into the small building, when someone cried “fire.” In the panic that ensued, dozens of people were injured and six were killed, including four children. An inquest ruled that the tragedy was an accident but clearly the Commission had failed in its duty to protect immigrants by not affording them proper quarters.<sup>71</sup> Dillon, Irwin, and all those associated with the Commission must have been bitterly disappointed and frustrated that they were falling behind in their efforts to help their fellow countrymen.

The committee, investigating the Commission, reported in the summer of 1852. It recommended several reforms including changing the membership of the commission to reduce conflicts of interest, improving accounting practices in the collection of fees, and providing cleaner facilities for the Labor Exchange. In general, though, it praised the Commission and its employees for doing the best that could be done under the circumstances.<sup>72</sup>

After 1852, the successive waves of immigrants finally began to diminish as Ireland slowly recovered from the famine. By 1853, the Commission was exerting more effective control over the immigration problem. Gregory Dillon, while continuing to be a member of the Commission, focused more of his attention on his new position as president of the recently

established Irish Emigrant Industrial Bank. Sadly, Dillon did not live to see the implementation of his ultimate goal, the establishment of an enclosed Emigrant Reception Center that would prevent runners from coming in contact with the immigrants. On March 3, 1854 Gregory Dillon passed away, and the Irish community mourned his passing.<sup>73</sup> For James Irwin it meant the loss not only of a good friend but also of his strongest advocate.

When the Emigration Reception Center was opened at Castle Clinton in 1855, a major blow was dealt to the runners and those who had hired them. Now that an eight-foot fence protected the newly arrived immigrants, the need for the services of an emigrant agent such as Irwin diminished considerably. By then, James Irwin was a citizen of the United States, having taken advantage of the naturalization law which granted citizenship after a five year residency.<sup>74</sup> Although he continued to be listed as an “agent” in the New York City directories through 1858, he only worked part time. In the United States Census of 1850, Irwin listed his occupation as “carpenter.”

Like many Irish immigrants of this period, Irwin paid a physical price for the years spent working at the flashpoint of the great migration. The historian Kerby Miller quoted one Irish-American’s assessment of the prospects of long-term survival for an Irish immigrant during the famine migration: “A man who labors 10 or 12 years in America... becomes old before his time and dies unheeded.”<sup>75</sup> On July 3, 1858, at the age of fifty-four, James Irwin passed away. A month later the residents of Staten Island burned to the ground one of the last vestiges of the original immigrant business, the Quarantine Station. A new era in the history of immigration was about to begin.

James Irwin’s funeral service was held in his home on July 4, 1858, and the following day the family buried him in Calvary Cemetery on a Queens County hillside overlooking Manhattan Island. Today no marker identifies his gravesite. But James Irwin’s death was not completely “unheeded.” In addition to his descendants, which included three generals, a Medal of Honor recipient, and a granddaugh-

ter who married Col. Robert McCormick of *Chicago Tribune* fame, Irwin's legacy also included the thousands of immigrants whom he welcomed to a new country by offering them protection and a friendly hand at a time of incredible stress and suffering.<sup>76</sup>

The author expresses his appreciation to the great, great grandchildren of James Irwin for providing him access to the Irwin Family Papers.

## Endnotes

- 1 An earlier version of this article appeared in the journal *New York History*, vol.93, issue 3, published by the New York Historical Association.
- 2 *Annual Reports of the Commissioners of Emigration of the State of New York, 1847–1860* (New York, 1861), Table A, 289; "Report of a Special Committee on Quarantine Laws," New York State Assembly Doc. 60 (Albany, 1846), Table 6. Prior to May 1847, it is difficult to determine the total number of Irish immigrants because, at the time, they were included with others from Great Britain. An approximation would have 50,000 arriving in New York in 1845, 60,000 in 1846, and 40,000 for the first five months of 1847. There were 890,000 who arrived between May 1847 and 1854. There were two State Assembly Documents published regarding the Quarantine, both numbered No. 60. One was published in 1846 [hereafter referred to as Assembly Doc.60 (1846)], and the other in 1849.
- For the standard sources on immigrant life in New York City see, Robert Ernst, *Immigrant Life in New York City, 1825–1863* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994); Jay P. Dolan, *The Immigrant Church: New York's Irish and German Catholics, 1815–1865* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977); Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Hasia R. Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Paul A. Gilje, "The Development of an Irish American Community in New York City before the Great Migration," and Hasia R. Diner, "'The Most Irish City in the Union': The Era of the Great Migration, 1844–1877," in Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher, eds., *The New York Irish* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 70–106; Tyler Anbinder, *Five Points: The 19th-Century New York City Neighborhood That Invented Tap Dance, Stole Elections, and Became the World's Most Notorious Slum* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 38–105; Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 735–760.
- 3 "Report of a Committee to Inquire Into the Propriety of the Removal of the Quarantine Establishment," New York State Assembly Doc. 60 (Albany, 1849), 5. Hereafter referred to as Assembly Doc. 60 1849.
- 4 Friedrich Kapp, *Immigration and the Commissioners of Emigration of the State of New York* (New York, 1870), 46.
- 5 Terry Coleman, *Going to America* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 192.
- 6 Testimony of R. Schoger in "Report of Select Committee Appointed by the Legislature of New York to Examine into Frauds Upon Emigrants" *New York State Assembly Doc. No. 250* (Albany, 1847) [hereafter referred to as *Assembly Doc 250*].
- 7 "Testimony of Charles Cook," *Assembly Doc 250*, 11.
- 8 Irwin Family Papers (private collection), Doylestown, Pennsylvania.
- 9 Charles Chenevix Trench, *Grace's Card: Irish Catholic Landlords, 1690–1800* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1977), 100.
- 10 Brian Smith, *The Horse in Ireland* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1991), 174.
- 11 Jonah Barrington, *Personal Sketches of His Own Times* (London: Henry Colburn, 1827), 146.
- 12 The Reverend John Hunt not only owned *Roundfort* near the town of Athleague, but also property in Rahara where Irwin's father-in-law, Bernard Dowling, lived. John Garty was shown in the Tithe Applotment Assessment Book for the Civil Parish of Athleague on November 1, 1821 as leasing *Roundfort* from John Hunt, but by 1825 he had signed it over to Irwin. Tithe Applotment Assessment Books, Knockadangan, Civil Parish of Athleague, Co. Roscommon. National Archives of Ireland, 89 25/44.
- 13 Irwin's son Bernard was six foot three and his grandson was over six feet. A description of James Irwin



- was written on the reverse of a *carte de visite* of James Irwin in possession of the Irwin family.
- 14 Irwin Family Papers. Irwin's son James became an alderman for the city of Newark, NJ. His sons Albert, Hubert and Bernard fought in the Civil War. See: John H. Fahey, "Bernard John Dowling Irwin and the Establishment of the First Field Hospital at Shiloh," *Military Medicine* 171 (2006): 345–51.
  - 15 Anne Coleman, *Riotous Roscommon: Social Unrest in the 1840's* (Portland: Irish Academic Press, 1999).
  - 16 Memorial of Deed between James Irwin and Rev. John Hunt, May 15, 1845, Registry of Deeds Land Index Books, Dublin, 1845–9–41.
  - 17 *Roscommon Journal*, June 7, 1845.
  - 18 *New York Herald*, July 31, 1845. Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, New York, 1820–1897; Year: 1845; Arrival: New York, New York; Microfilm Serial: M237; Microfilm Roll: 59; Line: 2; List Number: 602; Records of the U.S. Customs Service, Record Group 36; National Archives, Washington, D.C.
  - 19 According to the family's web site, <http://www.van-hoevenberg.com>, there are multiple spellings of the name "Van Hovenburgh." For consistency, the author uses Van Hovenburgh.
  - 20 *New York Tribune*, June 28, 1845.
  - 21 Richard J. Purcell, "The Irish Emigrant Society of New York," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 38 (1938), 384.
  - 22 *New York Weekly Herald*, July 12, 1845.
  - 23 Minutes of the Irish Emigrant Society, Emigrant Savings Bank Records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, June 3, 1845 [hereafter referred to as Minutes].
  - 24 Testimony of Henry Van Hovenburgh, *Assembly Doc 250*, 34.
  - 25 Minutes, July 11, 1845.
  - 26 Testimony of James Roach, *Assembly Doc 250*, 93.
  - 27 Minutes, October 14, 1845.
  - 28 "Testimony of Gregory Dillon," *Assembly Doc 250*, 60.
  - 29 *New York Weekly Herald*, July 12, 1845.
  - 30 By May 1846, when *Doggett's City Directory* was published, the Irwins had moved into an apartment on the corner of East Eleventh Street and First Avenue in the city's rapidly growing Seventeenth Ward. See, *Doggett's New York City Directory for 1846–1847* (New York, 1846), 294.
  - 31 Minutes, April 3, 1846.
  - 32 Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 281.
  - 33 "Document No. 1: Description of the Quarantine Grounds and Hospital Buildings," *Assembly Doc. 60* (1846), 59–60. Harris E. "Description of the Quarantine Buildings," *New York Herald*, September 3, 1858.
  - 34 *Assembly Doc. 60* (1849), 10.
  - 35 *Assembly Doc. 60* (1849), 52.
  - 36 John Duffy, *History of Public Health in New York* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1968), 334.
  - 37 *New York Spectator*, May 23, 1846; *New York Evening Post*, July 28, 1846; *New York Evening Post*, July 30, 1846.
  - 38 Act of Incorporation of the Irish Emigrant Society of New York, Passed April 29th 1844 together with the By-Laws of the Society, Adopted June 14th 1865 (New York, Brown, 1866), 6.
  - 39 Marion R. Casey, "Friends in Need," *Seaport* 30, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 31.
  - 40 Minutes, July 17, 1846.
  - 41 Minutes, August, 1846
  - 42 John O'Rourke, *The History of the Great Irish Famine of 1847 with Notices of Earlier Irish Famines* (Dublin : James Duffy and Co., Ltd., 1902), 156.
  - 43 James S. Donnelly, Jr., *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, (Gloucestershire: Sutton, 2001), 67–68; Noel Kissane, *The Irish Famine: A Documentary History*, (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997) 46–54; Susan Campbell Bartoletti, *Black Potatoes: The Story of the Great Irish Famine, 1845–1850* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2001), 53–59; Tomas Gallagher, *Paddy's Lament: Ireland 1846–1847, Prelude to Hatred* (New York: Harcourt Brace Co, 1987); John Killen, ed., *The Famine Decade: Contemporary Accounts, 1841–1851* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1995).
  - 44 William A. Spray, "Irish Famine Emigrants and the Passage Trade to North America," in *Fleeing the Famine: North America and Irish Refugees, 1845–*

- 1851, ed. Margaret M. Mulrooney (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 4.
- 45 Edward Laxton, *The Famine Ships: The Irish Exodus to America* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1998); Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 292; Coleman, *Going to America*, 120. The term “coffin ships” has come to be associated with those ships which sailed to Canada during this same period. The mortality on those ships was even higher than that of ships reaching the United States.
- 46 Spray, “Irish Famine Emigrants and the Passage Trade,” 4.
- 47 Duffy, 337; Arthur L. Gelston and Thomas C. Jones, “Typhus Fever: Report of an Epidemic in New York City in 1847,” *The Journal of Infectious Diseases* 136, No. 6 (December 1977), 813–821.
- 48 Richard J. Purcell, “The New York Commissioners of Emigration and Irish Immigrants,” *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 37 (1948): 30.
- 49 Purcell, “The New York Commissioners of Emigration and Irish Immigrants,” 30.
- 50 Minutes, June 8, 1847.
- 51 In 2006, many of these graves were excavated as part of a construction project on Staten Island. The remains of approximately 60 individuals were recovered with the intent of being reinterred in a memorial park to be built on the same site as the mass graves. Lara Marlowe, “New resting place for mass grave immigrants in New York,” *The Irish Times*, October 10, 2009. Suzanne Lebarre, “Honoring the Bones,” *New York Times*, September 23, 2007.
- 52 Minutes, September 11, 1847.
- 53 Testimony of James Roach, *Assembly Doc 250*, 91.
- 54 Testimony of James Erwin [sic], *Assembly Doc 250*, 8.
- 55 Testimony of James Erwin [sic], *Assembly Doc 250*, 51.
- 56 “An Act for the Protection of Emigrants Arriving in the State of New-York,” April 11, 1848 in Laws of the State of New-York, Passed at the Seventy-First Session of the Legislature, Begun the Fourth Day of January, and Ended the Twelfth Day of April, 1848 at the City of Albany (Albany: Charles Van Benthuysen, 1848), 328.
- 57 Minutes, September 22, 1848.
- 58 “Report of the select committee to examine into the condition, business accounts and management of the trusts under the charge of the Commissioners of Emigration” *State of New York Assembly Doc. No. 34* (Albany, 1852) [hereafter referred to as *Assembly Doc 34*].
- 59 *Assembly Doc 34*, 7.
- 60 Coleman, 184.
- 61 Coleman, 185.
- 62 “Testimony of Charles Gallagher,” *Assembly Doc 34*, 56.
- 63 “Testimony of Charles Cook,” *Assembly Doc 34*, 96.
- 64 “Testimony of Isaiah Selover,” *Assembly Doc 34*, 71.
- 65 “Testimony of Isaiah Selover,” *Assembly Doc 34*, 71.
- 66 “Horrible Mismanagement at the Emigration Office,” *New York Herald*, January 24, 1850.
- 67 “The Emigration Office in the Park,” *New York Herald*, February 8, 1850.
- 68 “Case of the Emigrants,” *Irish American Weekly*, February 10, 1850.
- 69 *Assembly Doc 34*, 9.
- 70 *Assembly Doc 34*, 12.
- 71 *New York Times*, January 14, 1852.
- 72 *Assembly Doc 34*.
- 73 “Death of Gregory Dillon,” *New York Times*, March 8, 1854.
- 74 “James Irwin, New York, October 14, 1850” in National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); Washington, D.C.; Soundex Index to Petitions for Naturalizations Filed in Federal, State, and Local Courts in New York City, 1792–1906 (M1674); Microfilm Serial: M1674; Microfilm Roll: 120.
- 75 Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 319.
- 76 *New York Times*, July 5, 1858; Calvary Cemetery Office letter to BJD Irwin, May 13, 1893 in possession of the Irwin family. While Irwin’s gravesite is unmarked, the cemetery has records identifying the location of the Irwin family plot.