



*Irish-American Identity:
Personal Experience and Historical Evaluation*

The role of the Irish immigrant in California and the San Francisco Bay Area has been subject to review and interpretation ever since the Reverend Hugh Quigley wrote *The Irish Race in California and on the Pacific Coast* more than a century and a quarter ago. The tone that pervaded Quigley's chronicle—one of promise and optimism—still finds echoes, albeit with critical insight and far greater nuance, in the last essays of this collection. Two California scholars discuss the Irish-American experience in reflections that are drawn both from their personal histories as native San Franciscans and from their lifelong careers as academic historians. In the first essay, Kevin Starr, until recently California State Librarian, offers an autobiographical reflection on his early years in San Francisco, his gradual awareness of his own Irish heritage, and the evolution of his intellectual appreciation of the Irish experience in California. In the second essay, James P. Walsh provides a comprehensive summary analysis of that experience. The son of Irish immigrants, his critique is informed by his own family history in San Francisco as well as four decades of research on the California Irish. The essay draws a clear distinction between the San Francisco pattern of openness, acceptance, and relative prosperity and the stereotypical portrayal of the Irish experience in the East. Despite the inventiveness and exaggerations of Father Quigley's 1878 chronicle, these favorable San Francisco Bay Area conditions make understandable Quigley's enthusiastic observation that the Irish who pitched their tents in California rarely, if ever, returned to the East.



Fragments of Identity, Lost and Found

KEVIN STARR



If history could be understood and written in straight lines, I should be able, unambiguously, to discern and describe my Irish-American heritage. I am, after all, a fourth-generation San Franciscan whose maternal great-grandparents and maternal grandfather were born in Ireland, arriving in San Francisco, a most Irish of American cities, in the early 1850s and late 1880s respectively. My relatives include men and women bearing such surnames as Norton, Collins, McCarthy, Driscoll, O'Connell, associated with each other through common ancestors who can be traced back to the Ireland of the 1820s. Indeed, since my maternal grandfather—the San Francisco fireman Thomas Patrick Collins, who fought the great conflagration of April 1906 and died in the line of duty in 1925—was born in Ireland, I was for a while technically eligible to apply for an Irish passport and, still for that matter, may be able to do so. Had I an unambiguous relationship to my past, I might now in my early sixties see myself, rather proudly, as so many of my cousins do, as an Irish American in direct contact with his Irish-American heritage and avidly enamored of the full spectrum of Irish history and culture down through the ages.

Yet I cannot reach back and appropriate such a heritage because my personal history, at least as far as my Irish identity is concerned, has not been written in straight lines. My mother, first of all, did not marry Irish, nor did she marry Catholic either, which was why my parents' wedding had to be held in the rectory of Sacred Heart Church at the corner of Hayes and Fillmore in San Francisco in 1939, the very same church in which, some three years later, my mother's brother would celebrate his first mass as a Maryknoll priest. My mother married Protestant—into a family, however, that could trace some of its ancestry to an Irish-born maidservant who came to San Francisco from Sydney, Australia, in the early 1850s with her employers and left their service to marry a local gentleman. This solitary Irish ancestor on my father's side—she would be my paternal great-grandmother—had quite soon been amalgamated into an Anglo-American Episcopalian family with seventeenth-century Rhode Island roots.

My very name, with its Irish beginning *Kevin*, its Welsh middle *Owen*, and its Anglo-American surname *Starr*, would forever broadcast the fact that I was not, on balance, an unalloyed Irishman.

The non-Irish Protestant family which had produced my father sustained its own tangled history of shortcomings and downward mobility. As Angells from Rhode Island, my father's family could lay claim to many distinguished kinsmen, including a great sportswriter and a notable president of Yale University. My paternal great-grandfather had successfully practiced pharmacy in San Francisco until his death in the late 1890s. His son, my paternal grandfather, had taken a doctorate in pharmacy from the University of California in San Francisco. Yet over the years, my father's family had experienced a loss of status in San Francisco that would not be reversed until my own generation. Bad times began when my paternal grandfather, who had spent many years in the American South as a patent medicine entrepreneur, abandoned his South Carolina-born wife, my grandmother, in favor of a second (possibly bigamous) union back in San Francisco. Things got worse when my grandfather died early in the Depression, thus ending child support and forcing my father to terminate his education short of a high school diploma and join the Civilian Conservation Corps. Hence, at the time of their marriage in their early twenties, my mother, the granddaughter of Irish immigrants, had finished high school (Presentation, Class of 1934), but my father, in his own way the scion of pre-Revolutionary War stock, had dropped out of Balboa High School in his sophomore year.

There they were then: two young people, standing side by side before the priest in the rectory of Sacred Heart Church in San Francisco—whether they knew it or not, members of the working class—each of them, whether they knew it or not, equally possessed of a streak of instability that would end their union within three short years. Working people in those days—my father an oiler in the shipyards at Hunters Point, my mother a clerk at Acme Fast Freight—could do rather well, as far as housing was concerned. They lived in a comfortable flat on Page Street in St. Agnes Parish in the Haight Ashbury, where I was born in September 1940, and were capable, sometime in the following year, of making a down payment on a two-bedroom junior five on Bixby Street in a newly developing neighborhood on the southern edge of the city.

Within another year and a half, all this came to a catastrophic collapse as my mother, destabilized by her second pregnancy, suffered a nervous breakdown and left my father, and he, three years later, at the age of twenty-seven, endured an operation for a brain tumor that left him legally blind for the rest of his life. After a few short years of being foisted on various relatives, supplemented by daycare at the Holy Family Day Home near Mission Dolores, my brother and I were placed in a Catholic orphanage in the city of Ukiah in Mendocino County north of San Francisco. Called Alberinium or St. Albert's School, the orphanage was under the supervision of the Dominican sisters of Mission San José.

The point of relating all this is not to rehearse my hard-luck story. Far from it. In comparison to what millions of children endure today across the world, mine was a lucky story; for the Dominican

Sisters at the Albertinium ran a most efficient and friendly establishment, and to this day I consider the wonderful nuns who raised me mothers of a most powerful kind. The point is that divorce, in those days at least, disassociated and disassimilated children from their extended families. Hence, in many cases, any sense of a larger family saga, including its ethnic and cultural heritage, was lost. I was cut off from both my Anglo-American Protestant relatives on my father's side and my Irish-Catholic relatives on my mother's. I was, however, according to the laws and usages of that era, raised as a Roman Catholic—indeed, raised by white-robed nuns who embodied Holy Mother Church herself.

As children of non-coping divorced parents, my brother and I became a burden to my relatives, whether on my father's or mother's side, which is why we found ourselves in the orphanage. I was thus cut off from any sense of my Anglo-American heritage, which had been lost in obscurity and name change anyway and would most likely not have been available to me, even if my parents had remained happily ensconced in Bixby Street. As far as my mother's side of the family was concerned, the situation was even more distressing. My brother and I had become the boys no one had room for among a number of Irish-Catholic families who, following the Depression, were themselves beginning to experience a wave of prosperity during the war and postwar years. All those Irish Catholic relatives of mine were in the process of entering the middle class. True, none of them had gone to college, with the exception of my uncle the Maryknoll priest, who later became a missionary bishop in Bolivia; yet in those days you did not have to go to college to get a solid job, as my uncles and aunts were getting, in the fire department, in various branches of civil service, with the Southern Pacific: jobs that enabled working people to buy homes in the Sunset, send their children to parochial school, and drive shiny new cars. Their children, in turn, which is to say, my cousins, would for the most part attend college in the explosion of opportunities that was the 1950s and early 1960s. My generation of cousins and first cousins once removed acquired advanced degrees in electrical engineering from Stanford, doctorates from the University of Oregon and Harvard, an MD from Creighton University, an MSW from the University of Texas, together with a law degree and assorted bachelors degrees from the University of San Francisco and the San Francisco College for Women. True, approximately half of my cousins did not go on to college, but the trend was clear. At some point in the 1940s—just when my brother and I were losing our parents, home, and heritage—a group of longtime San Francisco Irish families was in the process of making a transition from the working class to the middle class that its college-educated offspring would complete.

I was thus deracinated from my Irishness because my Irish relatives were upwardly mobile, and my brother and I were not. We were a problem, boys in need of a home; and we were most likely an embarrassment as well, a visible symbol of dysfunctionality and failure. Things would get worse. After four and a half years in the Albertinium, my brother was asked to leave. In current terms, he had become a behavior problem. My mother removed me as well, and she took the two of us to live with her in the Potrero Hill Housing Project in San Francisco, supported by a \$135 a month welfare check from the

City and County of San Francisco. Here we were, then, at the absolute bottom of the social ladder that my Irish Catholic relatives were even then climbing so successfully. What kind of Irish-American story could I, this shabby neglected boy, tell himself? How could I be expected to glimpse the glories of an Irish-American world that had excluded me?

Where were your relatives through all this, my wife and daughters would in later years ask me? Was there no one to take you in? Was there no one to protest the fact that you were placed in an orphanage, however benevolent? Was there no one who sensed your disgrace at being on welfare and living in a housing project? To be honest, such questions never occurred to me at the time. All that I knew was that I was surrounded by squalor and disorder and that I wanted out, wanted into the world of my Irish Catholic relatives who had homes in the Sunset or Stonestown, drove big cars, vacationed on the Russian River.

The nuns who raised me at the Albertinum in Ukiah were predominately German-born. They spoke German in their refectory, and on Saturdays they drank a beer with their lunch. My favorite nun, the housemother of my dormitory, had come from Germany as a young nun just after World War I. She would read to us each evening before we went to sleep, speaking English in a musical Bavarian accent. I wept when she was transferred to St. Catherine's Academy in Anaheim. I begged her not to go. Those German-American sisters, I can see in retrospect, provided me with a sense of identity and personal culture that would one day take me from the Potrero Hill Housing Project and bring me to other places. They were superb teachers, cooks, and housemothers. They cut the boys' hair once a month. They prepared us for our first holy communion. When we came into the chapel to serve an early morning mass, they were already there in their black choral robes in banked choir stalls facing each other before the altar, antiphonally chanting their early morning office. The Catholicity they imparted to those capable of receiving such a message was at once a religion, a mode of learning, a source of love and comfort, and an identity, a sense of family for orphans or *de facto* orphans to take through life. Long before I knew myself as Irish, or even half-Irish, or cared anything about such matters, I knew myself as Catholic, Dominican, and German-American in orientation; and after leaving the Albertinum, I continued such tutelage for three more years at St. Boniface School in the Tenderloin, where Mission San José Dominicans also taught.

I commuted there by bus from the Potrero Hill Housing Project. After school, I remained in the downtown for as long as possible, not wishing to return to the Project, kept busy by a paper route for

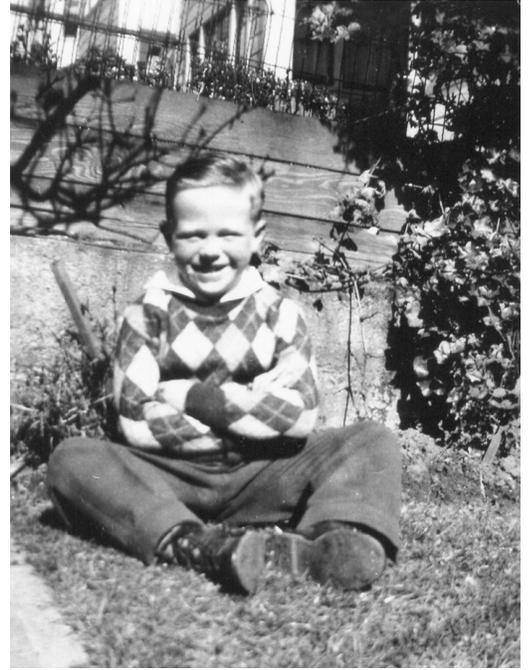


FIGURE 6-1 Kevin Starr, age 6, San Francisco, 1945–1946. *Photo credit: Keven Starr.*

the *San Francisco News*. As luck would have it, my routes—A5 and A9 were their designations—brought me to the office buildings and department stores of the downtown, especially the area between Union Square and Market Street. There, delivering some one hundred or more papers a day, I encountered varieties of urban civility and occasional touches of elegance that, so I now understand, offset the squalor and hopelessness of my home surroundings. Included in my responsibilities for the A5 route was the Phelan Building on Market Street. In the lobby of the building was a bust of James Phelan Senior placed there by his son, James Duval Phelan, the elegant and resourceful mayor of San Francisco at the turn of the century and, later, a United States senator. The inscription beneath the bust memorialized Phelan Senior's career as a pioneering San Francisco merchant. In such a fragmented, even haphazard way, did I first encounter the larger history of Irish Catholic San Francisco, from the ranks of whose minor bourgeoisie I had been excluded.

Well, almost excluded. My maternal grandmother, Mollie Norton Collins (1888–1964), did not desert or exclude me, although she was limited in what she could do to provide me or my brother a home. During my teenage years, I became progressively a friend and confidante of my grandmother. She had been born and raised in San Francisco, one of nine children born to my Irish-born great-grandfather, a relatively prosperous owner of a horse-drawn drayage and hansom cab business, and his Irish-born wife. I have a photograph of my maternal great-grandparents taken just before World War I. My great-grandfather's three-piece tweed suit and my great-grandmother's satin dress and feathered hat, together with the Jackson Street backdrop of their home, suggest a couple who had done rather well in life through the hard work of stables, horses, drayage, and hansom cabs serving the hotel district. My grandmother had finished the eighth grade, then gone to work as a milliner's assistant, making the fancy hats of the period. Her real interest, however, was Thomas Patrick Collins, a handsome black-haired Irish firefighter in the nearby fire house on Jackson Street. At age fifteen, my grandmother later told me, she would walk by the fire house deliberately, some two or three times a day, in the hope of having a chance to visit with the young firefighter who had come to San Francisco as a teenager in the late 1880s in the company of his sister, served as a corporal in the Philippines with the First California Volunteers during the Spanish-American War, and would soon be fighting the Great Fire of April 1906.

My grandmother was sixteen years old when she married Thomas Patrick Collins at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church atop Russian Hill. Their wedding reception was at the Savoy Tivoli on Grant Avenue in North Beach, and their first flat (they were lifetime renters) was on Jackson Street, where so much had already happened. The couple would eventually have seven children including my mother, born in 1917 before Pa, as he was always called, succumbed in 1925 to a heart attack during a training exercise. Because he had contracted malaria in the Philippines as a serving soldier and had been medically discharged from the Army and because he had died in the line of duty with the fire department, my grandmother was able to raise her seven children on

two pensions, one from the federal government and one from the City of San Francisco. Mollie Collins had, in fact, been able to raise her children in some comfort in spacious rented flats on Waller Street in the Hayes Valley, and later, on the first block of Clayton Street near the University of San Francisco.

I loved my grandmother for herself, but I also loved being with her because of the orderliness of her life, which stood in such dramatic contrast to the disorderliness of my home in the Potrero Hill Housing Project. Once a month, I would stay overnight with my grandmother in her well-furnished flat for two or three days, using as my excuse the fact that she had to take care of my paper route collections, which could reach two or three hundred dollars before I turned them in to the newspaper. I loved the peace, dignity, and comfort of my grandmother's house. I loved the dinners she prepared for me: creamed tuna on toast, tamale pie, pork chops baked in a deep dish of scalloped potatoes, Jell-O for dessert, into which she suspended, just before the Jell-O had fully stabilized in the refrigerator, a can of fruit cocktail.

My grandmother's house had beautiful furniture, and in the dining room were the framed diplomas of my uncle, the Maryknoll bishop in Bolivia. There were also glass cases of old books, including a first American edition (1897) of Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis*, which I read in October 1954 and still own, keeping it alongside the first book from my paper route earnings, the one-volume edition of Carl Sandburg's *Abraham Lincoln* (1954) which I purchased that same year in the book department of the Emporium.

"Nana," I would say to her, "tell me about the olden days." And she would tell me, among other things, about the Panama Pacific International Exposition held in the Marina District in 1915, where she had bought the very same banana plant which had grown to such gigantic proportions in her back sun room. She would provide me with first-hand accounts of Polk Street at the time Erich von Stroheim filmed *Greed* there. She also told me the story of how she had personally gone with a number of her children to see Mayor Sunny Jim Rolph when my grandfather had gotten into some difficulties in the fire department, due to the Creature, with whom every Irishman must dialogue; and Mayor Rolph had, picking up the phone, cleared the matter with the chief, returning my father to duty. (When I later wrote of this incident in the *San Francisco Examiner*, it offended one of my aunts terribly.) From my grandmother, I absorbed something of the dignity, intelligence, and gossip of nineteenth and early twentieth century San Francisco, especially in its Irish dimension. Although I did not know it at the time, I was reclaiming my Irish identity through these sessions, just the two of us over dinner, when my grandmother was telling me about the olden days. The buildings to which I delivered my newspapers in the downtown, moreover, especially the Flood and the Phelan Buildings, exuded an ambience, a sense of time past and past time continuing into the present, that reinforced my grandmother's stories. Who had built such beautiful buildings, I asked myself: such marble corridors and wrought iron railings, such speeding elevators driven by uniformed operators, women in

the main, with bright red fingernails and lipstick smiles, who greeted me so cheerfully each weekday afternoon when I came with my newspapers?

Thus, my Catholic culture instilled in me by German-American nuns, began to coalesce with a second factor, San Francisco, in an alembic of identification and identity on the part of a twelve-year-old, whom, so it would seem, no one wanted. Was there anything particularly Irish about any of this, aside from the bust of James Phelan in the lobby of the Phelan Building? Yes there was, and time would reveal its power and complexity. Later, through study and personal identification, I would come to understand San Francisco as a city powerfully Catholic and Irish in its formative years. But that would take time.

I would also come under other influences. My high school teachers, the Fathers of St. Sulpice who staffed St. Joseph's College Preparatory in Mountain View, the minor seminary of the Archdiocese of San Francisco, belonged to a decisively French tradition: one intended to instill in immigrant American boys the *esprit ecclésiastique* necessary (in those days at least) for admission to the diocesan priesthood. There were Irish Americans among them—my Greek teacher, for example—but even they had become significantly Gallicized by the seventeenth-century French Catholic ethos of their community. In a very real way, Sulpicians had as their central task the refining of Irish America on behalf of the American diocesan priesthood, just as the Sulpicians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had helped refine and organize the nascent American church, which in many instances they served as pioneering bishops.

Nor were the Jesuits of the University of San Francisco from which I graduated in 1962 aggressively Irish; for the California Province of the Society of Jesus had been predominantly Northern Italian in its nineteenth century origins and had retained, in part, some of the culture and style of Italy, as opposed to Ireland. Jesuits were educated in an ambience of villa and vineyard that was decidedly Italian in inspiration, and the Irish among them—a group which constituted the majority of the Province by the 1920s—took quite compatibly to this Mediterraneanism, which softened the edges of their Irishness, for the Mediterranean metaphor was at the core of California itself, including the California Province of the Society of Jesus.

It was at Harvard, a most New England of New England institutions, that I discovered the full resonance of this fusion of Irish and Mediterranean elements in the California story. I did so, initially, by happening upon a most intriguing book, *The Irish Race in California* (1878) by the Reverend Doctor Hugh Quigley, an expatriate Irish priest and former missionary in India, then teaching at St. Mary's College in San Francisco.¹ California, Father Quigley argued, became California precisely because it blended the Romanized Iberian in its New World identity and the Celtico-Roman spirit, which is to say, Ireland in dialogue with the Mediterranean world, as represented by the people, landscape, flora, and fauna of California. In California, Father Quigley believed, the Irish had found a second Holy Land. Irishman John Reed knew this well, arriving as he did as a sailor in 1826, jumping

ship, marrying a local widow, and living happily ever after as a *ranchero* in Marin County. Irishman James Richard Berry knew this as well. A gentleman by birth, he traveled in Spain and its colonies on business, arrived in California in 1836, and joined Reed as a *ranchero* in Marin. In the spring of 1845, when California still belonged to Mexico, an Irish priest, Eugene McNamara, petitioned the Mexican government for land in California on which to settle two thousand Irish-Catholic families. In California, McNamara argued, the Irish would find their promised land where their long suppressed culture and Catholicism, their long-starved hunger for property of their own, their hopes for social dignity and a voice in their own governance might be brought to fruition.

Even as Father McNamara was drawing up his petition, Martin Murphy, a native of County Wexford, was leading the first successful crossing of the Sierra Nevada, this in 1844, into California by prairie schooners. Dedicated to his faith, Murphy was taking his clan to California with the express purpose of residing in a Latin country. Arriving in the Santa Clara Valley, Murphy purchased the Rancho Ojo de Agua de la Coche south of San José, where he settled with his wife and three children. Through the years, both his holdings and his family grew. Three generations of Murphys dominated what is now called the Silicon Valley, living on their vast properties like ancient Irish kings.

In the years to follow, Americans of Irish descent, the majority of them born in Ireland, would play key roles in founding and developing the thirty-first state. The fact that California became a state in the first place involved a roll call of Irish Americans. Brigadier General Bennet Riley, the seventh military governor of California, set in motion the drive for statehood. Congress had made no provision for territorial government in California after its conquest of 1846. The South wanted slavery in California, at least south of the Tehachapi. The North wanted California to be free of slavery. Without territorial status, California was governed after 1846 under the international laws relating to conquered military territories, with a combination, that is, of Mexican *alcalde* and military law, with the senior military officer in California serving as the *de facto* civil and military governor. When thousands of Americans poured into California in the first phase of the Gold Rush, they demanded of Governor Riley their traditional legal rights. Well then, Riley replied, issuing a proclamation: form yourselves a government. Thus, an Irish-American brigadier general served—to mix gender metaphors—as the midwife of statehood for California.

The constitutional convention that gathered at Colton Hall, Monterey in September 1849 to design a government for the proposed state included such pivotal figures as William Shannon of County Mayo, chair of the rules committee, who played an important role in barring slavery from the new commonwealth; Philip Augustus Roach from County Cork, who played a key role in drafting our first state constitution; and Dublin-born J. Ross Browne, secretary to the convention. Within the decade, the Ireland-born David Broderick would go to the U.S. Senate, to be followed there by the County Galway-born John Conness and the County Westmeath-born Eugene Casserly. In 1860, the County Roscommon-born John Downey, a Los Angeles-based druggist,

rancher, banker, and real estate developer, became the first Irish-born state governor in the history of the nation. The story of California, nineteenth and twentieth century, is rich in Irish-American characters. It is a roll call that includes, among others, bishops (Patrick Manogue, born in Kilkenny, who made a fortune in the Gold Rush then treated himself to a first-rate ecclesiastical education in Paris); rogues (Denis Kearney of the Chinese Must Go movement in the 1870s); jurists (U.S. Supreme Court Justice Joseph McKenna); engineers (William Mulholland and Michael O'Shaughnessy of Los Angeles and San Francisco, respectively, who re-founded their cities through water); labor leaders (Frank Roney, author of one of the great autobiographies of American labor); dancers (Isadora Duncan, who revived the dance forms of ancient Greece); lawyers (Garret McEnerney, who recovered the Pious Fund in 1902); physicians (Dr. Hugh Toland, founder of what eventually became the Stanford Medical School); women religious (Sister Frances McEnnis, who brought the Daughters of Charity to California in 1852, and Mother Mary Baptist Russell, who brought the Sisters of Mercy to California three years later, just in time for a cholera epidemic); boxers (Gentleman Jim Corbett); poets (Agnes Tobin and John Steven McGroarty, also a congressman); mayors (James Duval Phelan of San Francisco); founders and re-founders of Los Angeles (Mulholland and Senator Stephen Mallory White, who helped transform Los Angeles into a deep-water port); developers (Fritz Burns); football coaches (Edward P. Slip Madigan of St. Mary's); newspapermen (James McClatchy); oil barons (Edward L. Doheny); aircraft manufacturers (T. Claude Ryan of San Diego, builder of the Spirit of St. Louis); educators (Dr. Franklin Murphy, chancellor of UCLA, also a refounder of the city).

I am, of course, amplifying Dr. Quigley's argument with references he did not make (especially to late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century Californians living long after Dr. Quigley had published his history!), but I am staying close to the core of the central message he presented in *The Irish Race in California* about the way California spoke to the deepest hungers of the Irish soul. When Irish pioneers such as Martin Murphy Sr., crossing the vast barrier of the Sierra Nevada, found themselves, at long last, under the shadow of Mission Santa Clara, Dr. Quigley believed, they knew that they were home: that they had arrived at a place peopled by a race with whom they shared the deepest of values and mutual imperatives. Encountering Hispanic California, Dr. Quigley argued, Irish Californians re-discovered not only Mexico or Spain but the entire range of Mediterranean values towards which the Irish had been yearning since Irish monks had begun to set sail to the south of Europe in the 700s and 800s so that they might re-discover and master the learning of that Mediterranean civilization that had once proven a matrix of unity for Western Civilization itself. St. Patrick, Dr. Quigley emphasized, was of Roman, not Irish, descent. He had received his priestly training in a Mediterranean monastery animated by the energies of Latin Christian civilization. Coming to Ireland, St. Patrick not only claimed Ireland for Christianity, he reclaimed Ireland into the unity of the Latin Mediterranean world. Something similar was happening in California.

I have redacted, expanded, and updated Dr. Quigley's book, which I read at Harvard and read again at the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley, at some length because I now suspect that its mytho-poetic assertions had more of an influence on me than I am even willing to admit. Long-winded and filled with obscure argument, *The Irish Race in California* is not a worthy book of nineteenth-century California. It is in so many ways a curiosity, an oddity. Yet it is suffused with mytho-poetic power in its effort to fuse European Mediterranean, Hispanic-American, and Irish-American cultures and people into the alembic of California. As such, Quigley's rambling polemic is more than the sum total of its faults. It represents, rather, an effort to energize history with what can be described as moral myth. Quigley wanted California to mean something. He was trying to explore questions of Celtico-Roman culture and value as they pertained to the California experiment.

The California-born Harvard philosopher Josiah Royce had the same goal in mind—a moral interpretation of California—which he would accomplish with a consistency and skill beyond Quigley's abilities. Researching the first volume of my *Americans and the California Dream* series at Harvard, I had the opportunity to examine extensively Royce's archives. I fell under their spell, and it was the example of Royce, one of the greatest Anglo-American Protestant philosophers in the golden age of American philosophy, that most fundamentally propelled the method and themes of my first book, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850–1915* (1973).² Thirty years later, however, looking back on it all, I see that the obscure Dr. Quigley also had his influence. If Josiah Royce allowed me to reclaim the Anglo-American Protestant dimension of my fragmented California identity, then Hugh Quigley must have spoken to the Irish Catholic side of the same question. Josiah Royce was a powerful thinker, trained at Berkeley, Jena, and Johns Hopkins. Dr. Quigley was a moral theologian with a Roman doctorate. Royce had the security of a Harvard academic appointment. Quigley lived the busy life of a missionary, a parish priest in California, and an instructor in a fledgling frontier college. Each of them wanted California to mean something. In Royce's case, that meaning consisted, in the main, of what he called the Higher Provincialism, which is to say, the love of one's province without succumbing to provincialism, the love of one's province in the context of world culture. Strangely enough, Dr. Quigley was grappling with the same challenge to interpret the California experience in terms of his Irishness and his membership in a world culture centered on Rome.

Thus, both Royce and Quigley pointed me in the direction of a re-consolidated identity in which the disparate fragments of my past could be integrated and made useful by my doing what they also had done: attempt to interpret California from a moral and imaginative perspective. Through Royce—grand, sonorous, a philosophical idealist trained in Germany—I could reclaim my lost Anglo-American Protestant identity. But I could also empathize with Josiah Royce, the young Californian who had grown up in an intermittently dysfunctional family, whose father had sold fruit from a cart in San Francisco, and in whom there was an element of inherited instability that would eventually lead to a serious nervous breakdown. Josiah Royce and Hugh Quigley had each walked the streets of

San Francisco at times of stress and transformation, as I had walked those very same streets delivering newspapers. Indeed, Josiah Royce had grown up on the very streets I knew so well. Each of these men had re-consolidated themselves in San Francisco. Royce had been a student at the Lincoln Grammar School, Boys High School (later Lowell High School), and the University of California at Berkeley across the Bay. He was then sent on to Germany for graduate study, thanks to a fund organized by University President Daniel Coit Gilman from a group of San Francisco businessmen belonging to the Chit Chat Club, a dinner and essay circle which I later joined.

Quigley re-consolidated himself in San Francisco as well, at St. Mary's College (before it moved to Oakland, then to Moraga), which had offered him haven after India had shattered his health. Royce's idealism and Quigley's mytho-poetic moralizing were of far different degrees of intellectual strength. Yet sometimes very minor figures, such as Quigley, can have an impact beyond the coherence and finish of their product. In any event, these two nineteenth-century San Franciscans had each in his own way propelled me towards the work of my writing life and, in so doing, the re-integration of my own identity. Royce did this for me in a way that I understood immediately, Quigley in a more obscure way that I have only recently begun to understand.

Notes

1. Hugh Quigley, *The Irish Race in California and on the Pacific Coast: With an Introductory Historical Dissertation on the Principal Races of Mankind, and a Vocabulary of Ancient and Modern Irish Names* (San Francisco: A. Roman, 1878).
2. See the Bibliography for citations for the *Americans and the California Dream* series published to date.



The Evolution of the Thesis

The Irish Experience in California Was Different

JAMES P. WALSH



California is full of wonderful things. . . . I am . . . stout in my conviction that if I were given Heaven and California, I would rent Heaven and live in California. . . .

James D. Phelan to Gertrude Atherton
Villa Montalvo, 13 June 1915¹

Considering James Duval Phelan's wealth, power, and cultivation, his unlimited enthusiasm for California was understandable. A broad financial empire and a natural assumption of destiny were his California inheritances. His playful indifference toward the afterlife he developed on his own. Although, the California environment undoubtedly helped there too. In each of life's sectors, he was more a product of California's future than Ireland's past. The naturalness with which Phelan appropriated California living spoke to the ease of cultural assimilation. Clearly, and unlike the bulk of the contemporary Irish elsewhere in America, Phelan (San Francisco mayor, United States senator, millionaire businessman, and cultural patron) was a favored beneficiary of a very different environment. And though he was very well placed, he was hardly unique.²

James Duval Phelan lived for California, for its progress and its celebration. He played a stage-two role, equal in importance to that of his Gold Rush father, James, an Irish-born immigrant who developed California's early infrastructure. For his turn, James Duval presided over California's conversion from a wealthy frontier outpost to a regional culture that he helped engrave on the popular imagination of America—indeed, of the world. Efficiency and progress, refinement in taste, beauty, literature, and the arts; indulgence, sexuality, and the comfortable *Sunset* magazine lifestyle—these were Phelan's defining interests. Modified to scale and popular comprehension, they became ingredients of California's dream.³

How and why Irish immigrants brought up an only son to such levels of personal confidence and public responsibility spring from two central features of the nineteenth-century Irish experience in San Francisco, California, and the West. These two critical factors were the determinants of Cali-

ifornia's unique Irish-American assimilation. Together they explain what has remained a troublesome interpretive problem for historians and, lately, for producers of documentaries. Those who have tried to explain the story of the American Irish with one, all-inclusive interpretation have stumbled before the ease of their California acculturation.⁴

First, the California environment in all its abundance, novelty, and remoteness was vital to the ease of Irish assimilation. Second, those Irish who traveled to the Far West were themselves better prepared to exploit the enhanced experiences, which California offered. The resulting Irish aberration—an acculturation that was prompt, positive, and satisfying—has persisted in mystifying interpreters limited to the one-interpretation-fits-all approach to Irish-American history. The best among them have sidestepped or neglected the interpretive challenge.⁵ Others, such as Walton Bean, misunderstood the story.⁶ Even among the California Irish themselves, some have lived and died with the erroneous assumption that they have been victims of rejection and discrimination.⁷ Early accounts of the Irish in the West were too focused or too creative to help.⁸ More recent works lacked critical analysis.⁹

What follows is intended as an explanation of a thesis: the Irish experience in San Francisco and California has been decidedly different from that of the Irish elsewhere in America.¹⁰ I have offered much of the how and the why in a variety of American and Irish publications since 1962.¹¹ I am grateful for this opportunity to gather the comprehensive story for the first time.

Starting in the 1950s, when the subject of Irish Americans first began to interest me as a student of United States history, I turned to the historical literature that was relevant and well regarded. Harvard's Oscar Handlin had received the Pulitzer Prize for his 1951 classic on immigrant adjustment, actually on the lack of adjustment. This decidedly gloomy assessment of immigrant life captured national attention with *The Uprooted*, ten years after his scholarly and more specifically Irish work, *Boston's Immigrants*.¹² Robert Ernst interpreted the New York City immigrant experience,¹³ and Earl F. Niehaus explained the New Orleans Irish.¹⁴ Stephan Thernstrom, with innovative methodology, offered generational-neighborhood studies that explored ethnic groups, their advance or their stagnation.¹⁵ Thomas N. Brown, a doctoral student of Handlin's, looked beyond number counting and offered an explanation for the persisting Irish-American devotion to political freedom for the old country.¹⁶ Along with the increase in scholarly books, the boom in university doctoral programs expanded research on the Irish in American politics, religion, and in social and cultural life.¹⁷ The more detailed picture that emerged remained the same, one of rejection and pain. When viewed from the historical perspective of San Francisco, the Irish experience depicted by scholars resembled trauma within a semi-colonial, third-world state.

Economically, the Irish struggled as the bulk of an unskilled labor pool within the emerging industrial cities of the Northeast. Before the factories developed, Irish men dug canals and constructed rail lines. Next, they served their time at subway and utilities construction. The former constituted

contract labor and prolonged absence from home and family. The latter allowed a more settled, though often violent family life. Urban politics intervened, thus creating the well-known nexus between city development and the Irish political machine. The spoils system, in turn, allowed employment within the expanding service sector, particularly public works, and in police and fire departments and transit systems. The coincidence of New England's industrialization and Ireland's Famine created the region's industrial proletariat. Education, the route up and out, was initially all but unavailable. Crime, the alternate route, was available.

In New York, the classic neighborhood role model for acquiring money and power (sex was not discussable) publicly and effectively ridiculed education. The sage of Tammany Hall, George Washington Plunkitt, bragged about spending only three winters in school. And as a successful ward leader, he enjoyed telling the press how he had to "unlearn" young men of college "rot" if they wanted political careers. Plunkitt's success rested on being alert, diligent, and always present. Education was to him an encumbrance.¹⁸ Those Irish Americans who resisted the Tammany tide included young men and women inclined toward religious callings, and fewer who thought of journalism or law. Once the Catholic schools began graduating students, Irish young women moved into the entry professions. But that progress took generations of endurance and sacrifice.¹⁹

Social and cultural integration, likewise, was limited and slow. The burdens of the immigrant experience combined with the paucity of economic opportunity within the nineteenth-century industrial cities fixed Irish status. Equally restricting was the rigidity of the society into which the Irish came. Most visible was the difference of religions. When the Irish arrived in Boston, New York, and the other major cities, those cities were like America—Protestant. The Catholic Church was an unwelcome, alien threat to America's cultural homogeneity and Protestant hegemony. To the more virulent Protestants, Catholic efforts at institution building appeared as an invasion of the America that they had assumed was their own. The leading historian of the Catholic Church, John Tracy Ellis, noted anti-Catholic bigotry and discrimination,²⁰ and he deplored its intellectual impact among Catholics. By fortifying themselves culturally, socially, and physically within their own immigrant institutions, Catholics, according to Ellis, created a "ghetto mentality." Protective withdrawal was the psychological response to the Americans who treated the Irish as a menace to the Republic.²¹

The timing of the massive Irish arrival into eastern cities following the Famine contained one benefit, at least in the short run. Before the Irish arrival, pre-industrial city management was a relatively modest, uncomplicated undertaking. Members of the elites merely took turns at the commonweal. The effectiveness of the dilettante and the part-time and temporary at urban management remained adequate as long as the needs of the pre-industrial populace remained undynamic. Industrialization, corporate organization, urban development, bureaucracy, technology, and immigration itself, however, ended that adolescence. Thereafter, the professional full-time manager became a necessity. Into the vacuum stepped the Irish politician, the boss with his politi-

cal machine—an invisible government that traded order for chaos and favors for votes. In time, the powerful political organizations improved the elementary economic and political position of the Irish within big city life. The cost, however, was great. From the 1870s, the Irish moved largely within their separate and curtailed society. They used urban politics as a tool in coping with a hostile America. Political historians who have analyzed the big city machines have found them to be both self-serving and progressive, but always limiting to those who served the machines and to those the machine served.²²

Handlin, Ernst, and the other scholars assessed what they found: disease, depression, dissention, sacrifice, and suicide. These were the products of human experiences within an unwelcoming environment. Thernstrom provided a multigenerational perspective in assessing neighborhood patterns of progress and retardation. Ellis, of course, added the intellectual assessment. The interpretative consensus was negative, lamentable to the Irish and to those who concerned themselves with poverty and its dysfunctional aftermath. The composite, then, of the Irish-American experience was one of exclusion, reaction, and pain. From this, Lawrence J. McCaffrey concluded that Irish in the urban industrial ghetto cultivated “paranoia, defeatism, and feelings of inferiority.”²³

When Thomas N. Brown assessed what Irish America might have considered its premier achievement, advancing political freedom in Ireland, his analysis harmonized with the discouraging conclusions already in place. Freedom for Ireland was propelled less by what was best for Ireland, less by Irish-American altruism, and more by an engrained sense of subcultural inferiority. Brown’s Irish Americans were “embittered people” who supported Irish nationalism so that they might aspire to parity among the established and unwelcoming Americans, among those whose homelands had long been free.²⁴

These defining interpretations apparently made sense—if you had not grown up in California and if you thought that Boston and New York were America. In my case, personal doubt preceded scholarly research, conference papers, and publications.²⁵

During the 1940s, my father often brought me to social and cultural events sponsored by San Francisco divisions of national Irish and Catholic men’s organizations. Standard programs invariably included remarks offered by visiting dignitaries from the national headquarters “back east.” Now, from the perspective of a half-century, what they said has become less memorable than how they said it. Invariably short in stature, these men seemed perpetually upset and angry. Predictably, they spoke in the harsh tones of militancy. Even to me as a youthful observer, they seemed out of sync with the group they addressed. That lack of harmony never bothered my father. He was there to see his friends, not to hear the message from the top.

A second recollection cast doubt about the western applicability of any “embittered people” interpretation of Irish assimilation. Later, as a teenager, I was walking with my father along Polk Street, opposite the San Francisco City Hall, when his cousin happened along. Appropriately enough, Mike

asked my father Pat, “How’s America treating you?” The two Galway men, lapsed Gaelic speakers who had become integrated into San Francisco life, simply smiled broadly and then laughed. They knew how well America was treating them, but each retained enough Connemara reticence to not ask about the other’s specific assets.²⁶

The dissonance between visiting East Coast Irish leadership and their California relations endures. As late as the fall of 1992, the mayor of Boston and subsequent United States Ambassador to the Vatican, Raymond L. Flynn, came west to firm up support for Bill Clinton’s presidential candidacy. En route, Mayor Flynn spoke at a luncheon hastily arranged by the San José–Dublin Sister City Program. The Silicon Valley Irish, with Raymond O’Flaherty doing the work, created the event out of consideration for the visiting dignitary. I attended because O’Flaherty asked me to and because my schedule allowed it.

My stroll through downtown San José was pleasant. I was comfortable and content—contemplating the conclusion of an academic career. When the Boston mayor began to speak, I closed my eyes and began to remember similar events of long past. For the moment I was young again, enjoying my father’s attentive presence and the old-country charm of his friends. The angrier the mayor’s words became and the shriller his tone, the more I welcomed the gentle reverie.

San José’s former Mayor Tom McEnery had already lined up the Silicon Valley leaders for Clinton. The results of the California Poll were clear, too. To win California in November, all Clinton needed to do was to stay alive until election day. But the Boston Irishman persisted. And in the end, he sank to a level of tribalism reminiscent of his political heritage, but not that of his hosts. With the glee of his political and cultural benefactor James Michael Curley, the Boston mayor hit rock bottom. He distributed a cartoon depicting Catholic priests, highballs in hand, leering at the image of Irish pop singer Sinead O’Connor. The cartoon lampooned the clergy. Decadent, they had hypocrisy on their lips and lust in their hearts. This purported nativist insult to Irish Catholicism was the Bostonian populist’s clincher, his reason why the California Irish needed to vote for Bill Clinton and the Democracy.

Almost two generations had passed since dad and his San Francisco friends took so lightly the strident messages from back east. Flynn’s offending page, published in the *Chicago Tribune*, displayed the names of the editor and the cartoonist, both of whom were themselves Irish. The total irrelevance to Flynn’s California audience was monumental.²⁷ When perceptions, values, and strategies diverge so significantly, diversity within Irish America calls for investigation. Flynn had been elected mayor of Boston three times and headed the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Geography was not the problem that day. It was experience. The mayor reflected a political environment that preferred him. His listeners reflected one quite different.

What aroused my scholarly interests in this subject was not that works by Handlin, Ernst, and Brown were wrong; they were not. What was wrong was the appropriation by other scholars of the

Boston and New York model and their reapplication to San Francisco and to California. A striking example within the contemporary historiography of San Francisco was a remarkable, but seriously flawed, study of the city's political culture.

Boss Ruef's San Francisco, by the professor of California history at UC, Berkeley, Walton Bean, received the Commonwealth Club of California's gold medal for nonfiction. Well-researched and written, and enjoying guidance available from an obscure manuscript previously subsidized by James Duval Phelan, the book assumed a San Francisco applicability of the eastern big-city machine.²⁸ Bean never questioned Tammany Hall's relevance to the California environment. He advanced it.²⁹ As a result, Bean predicated his San Francisco analysis upon a flawed conceptual framework. To cast his central figure, Abraham Ruef, as a machine boss, Bean offered cosmetic modifications. Ruef was a biological sport in politics: articulate, educated, cultured, Jewish, and multilingual. Bean, by appropriating the vocabulary of Tammany Hall versus the reformers, cast Ruef as a boss and invested him with a machine.³⁰

That Ruef bossed no one, commanded no machine, and behaved uncharacteristically (as a satirist, orator, and *bon vivant*) did not deter Bean's assumption of New York City relevance. The book's critical oversight, however, at least from the perspective of ethnic history, was that it failed to observe the ethnic content of the subject, particularly the Irish who were everywhere. Ruef was the central figure in the history of the graft prosecution because he was the chief influence peddler. Most of the other players were Irish: corrupt supervisors, their prosecutors, defense staffers, judges, special investigators, and a financial supporter of the lengthy and expensive prosecution. Even the discredited San Francisco Mayor Eugene E. Schmitz enjoyed a useful Irish connection. His mother was from County Clare, and he was a Catholic.³¹

What was different about the San Francisco graft prosecution was that the Irish populated all sides of the action. They were not merely the alleged corrupters of the body politic being brought to justice by their betters. In San Francisco, the pervasive Irish were among both the betters and the corrupt, categories that sometimes blended.³² Further, when the political conflict subsided and the winners and losers sorted themselves out, scant embitterment could form along ethnic lines.

This misapplication of research and concepts clearly focused the intellectual problem and invited an explanation. The one I offer, scattered until now among numerous American and Irish publications, addresses the interaction of the California environment and the Irish who availed themselves of opportune experiences.

Appropriately enough for the Irish in California, reality did follow art—almost. At the dawn of printing in Spain, popular fantasy literature first linked the Irish to a mythical California, a “terrestrial paradise” yet undiscovered by Europeans. The early sixteenth-century (1510) Spanish epic *Sergas de Esplandián* by Garci Rodriguez de Montalvo established California's essence as wealth and its demeanor as one of the wildest in the world. Montalvo populated the gold-rich society exclusively with

women, black Amazon warriors, who flew into combat upon the backs of male-eating griffins. The Californians mated with their defeated enemies then killed them. And to maintain California society, they fed their male offspring to the griffins.

Montalvo's assignment to his solitary Irishman, Maneli the Prudent, was as ambitious as the California he foretold. The junior of two Christian warriors, whom Queen Calafia accepted into paradise, Maneli the Prudent was expected to change the culture of California and to bring it into harmony with Christian beliefs.³³

Maneli and Calafia aside, the Irish did sail to California early. By the years of Mexican rule, a few Irish had already intruded into California's calm and pastoral lifestyle. The most celebrated was Wexford's Don Timoteo Murphy who backed the right faction in 1838 and became administrator of Mission San Rafael and a Mexican citizen. His Marin holdings approximated twenty-two thousand acres. He served also as *alcalde*, Indian agent, land commissioner, and justice of the peace.³⁴ The occasional seafarers who abandoned ship only to marry into California families are more noted than numerous, but they did exist.³⁵ Others, most notably the Martin Murphys, entered California successfully in family groups. They did so by wagon train, before the ill-fated Donner party, and they established themselves on their own landed estates.³⁶ In the aftermath of American acquisition in 1848, a Corkman from Fermoy, Philip A. Roach, served in transition as the last *alcalde* and first mayor of Monterey. Bilingual, Roach explained the new constitution in both Spanish and English.³⁷ California's military governor General Bennett Riley initiated the process of state building and had invited Roach's participation in the state's constitutional convention.³⁸

The difference in scale between the California population before and after the discovery of gold was absolute, yet no group destined to play innovative roles in American California predated and pre-positioned the Irish presence. The ships from which some jumped were not the *Mayflower*, but the Irish were present and were integrated at the start of American time. The sparsity of Irish numbers, though not altogether disproportionate to their place as a minority among Spanish-Mexican citizens, was less important than the fact of their presence. As self-selectees, the pre-gold, pre-statehood Irish set the precedent to which the subsequent influx of Irish conformed. They were voluntary immigrants who possessed resources, prospects, and useful experience; all of which prompted their assimilation.

James S. Holliday's aptly titled story of the Gold Rush years, *The World Rushed In*, captured the new demographic realities that followed after 1848.³⁹ The gold discovery evoked a major population movement, and along with the other peoples of the world, the Irish fully partook. The more immediately relevant contrast is not between the Irish and non-Irish argonauts but, rather, between the Irish who made it to California and those who remained in the big cities of the East. Though necessary, the comparison is unfair—Famine immigrants versus those with the interest and resources for mobility.

FIGURE 6-2 The Hibernia Bank (1892–) and Office Building at Jones and Market Streets, San Francisco. *Photo credit: San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.*



The mobile Irish chose from among the same three basic routes to California as the other gold seekers, usually terminating in the instant city—the port of San Francisco. The most expensive, comfortable, but somewhat dangerous was by sail around Cape Horn. The sea voyage was the choice of many who possessed the resources to pick up and move hastily, often without household encumbrances. The more stable route was by wagon train from Missouri that after 1848 followed routes that had been scouted and tested. Those immigrants could carry belongings and travel in groups less expensively. Overland, however, required far greater physical and emotional stamina. A cross-country alternate included small parties of horsemen like John Coffee Hays and Billy Mulligan who rode into San Francisco after combat experience in the war with Mexico.⁴⁰ The third route was via the Isthmus of Panama, which James Duval Phelan’s father selected in 1849. His experience was common enough, but fortunate and considerably more rewarding.

James Phelan the senior was born in Queen’s County and came to New Jersey as a child. By 1849, he was still single and sufficiently established in the hardware business to initiate his own start-up in the West. San Francisco, as an instant city, was to spawn a society beyond Phelan’s previous experience. With calculation, though, he converted his assets into products that he imagined would sell even in a society not yet formed. Wisely, he divided their shipment among three sailing vessels, two of which successfully rounded the Horn and arrived safely in San Francisco. He took the Panama route himself, survived jungle fever, and won a lottery drawing for his Pacific passage north to California.⁴¹

No matter which of the three routes the immigrants selected, the basic requirements were similar. The voluntary immigrants needed motivation, money, health, strength, and knowledge. Most

who lacked these prerequisites either did not begin the California journey or they faltered somewhere along the way.

Comparative studies of Irish and non-Irish immigrants revealed that the Irish actually enjoyed considerable advantages upon arrival. They possessed more urban experience than their fellow transplants. Many, like James Phelan, had resided in eastern cities, and San Francisco was a second-stage choice. New York and New Orleans were prior stopping points for many. Other cities included Boston, Philadelphia, London, Dublin, and Sydney. Irish actually gathered in San Francisco from cities scattered between the Mediterranean and Asia. Among these seasoned immigrants, more Irish arrived in family units. They had stability, as well as a greater number of dependents to support.⁴²

Native and pastoral California collapsed under the impact of gold seekers and American governance. Viewed from the cruel perspective of the society that was to follow, no existing encumbrance hampered the Irish as they arrived among the other peoples of the world. Unlike the simultaneous arrival of Famine Irish in Boston, New York, or Philadelphia, the Irish met no established elite in San Francisco. Prior position, old wealth, family, education, or prestige did not fix the society or, rather, the society-in-the-making. Money became the determinant, but there was no old money. One either had new money or aspired to its prompt acquisition. Not only did no one put an Irishman in his place, few thought or bothered with such notions because of the frenzy of acquisitiveness and the instant and temporary nature of the society. It was a society in which, intentionally or otherwise, no one seemed to know his place.⁴³

California's religious precedent, also in stark contrast to New York and New England, was advantageous to the Catholic Irish as well. The Spanish military and ecclesiastical authorities had together established the California mission and presidio systems, beginning in San Diego in 1769.⁴⁴ Mexican independence, secularization of the missions, and the overrunning of mission lands and granted estates by the vast influx of foreigners after 1848 brought the missions to the threshold of extinction. Yet, Catholicism was California's historic Christian religion, and the West's premier religious leader was Archbishop Joseph Sadoc Alemany. Upon his retirement (succeeded by Archbishop Patrick W. Riordan in 1884), Alemany restated his contentment with the health and institutional future of Catholicism in California. He was leaving the sun-splashed shore of natural beauty and material abundance and returning to a diminished Spain. Earlier in Alemany's episcopacy (1869), his archdiocesan *Monitor* foreshadowed his parting sentiments of appreciation. The church encouraged Catholic immigration because California lacked the prejudices so evident within eastern states.⁴⁵

Institution building characterized the later Alemany years and all of Archbishop Riordan's, until his death in 1914. Riordan, in fact, built the archdiocesan infrastructure twice—on both sides of the earthquake and fire of 1906. Again in contrast to the dioceses of the eastern urban centers, the San

Francisco Irish Catholics built neither for defense nor out of need for protection from a larger hostile environment. American California began without institutions and without the physical structures that they embodied. Along with no elite and no establishment, California had insufficient churches and no schools, seminaries, hospitals, orphanages, and asylums. Those who wanted the services of such institutions had to create them. The ghetto mentality had less relevance, and the institutions were for service, not protection. Likewise, constructing them was less of an economic burden on the Irish in California.⁴⁶

Archbishop Riordan's selection for archdiocesan attorney and chief counsel demonstrated the open and interactive relationship of Irish Catholic leadership with the builders of the state's secular institutions. Garret W. McEnerney, dean of the California bar, volunteered exemplary service to his church and his state by presiding over the expansion and development of both the University of California and the Archdiocese of San Francisco through the first four decades of the twentieth century. To the temporal and to the eternal he offered parallel service. As a progressive regent, he expanded the university system and developed Berkeley to the lift-off point of educational greatness. As a progressive counselor, he expanded archdiocesan holdings, twice, to a level of balance between the needs of the communicants and the adequacy of their institutions. And at life's end, the provider of equanimity, continuity, and growth divided his estate generously between the Archdiocese of San Francisco and the University of California. McEnerney's notable example reflected and fostered Irish-American acculturation.⁴⁷

Through the years of Catholic institution building, nativism plagued Catholics and Irish immigrants throughout much of the nation. Xenophobia was a recurring national phenomenon. In the 1850s, the Know-Nothing Party assailed, even burned Catholic institutions. In the 1890s, the American Protective Association (APA) denounced the presence of immigrants and pledged never to employ them. And in the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan, while directing its violence against African Americans, had energy enough to denounce popery and secure anti-Catholic legislation.⁴⁸

In San Francisco, all these movements were shallow, occasionally even comic replicas of national intolerance. The San Francisco Know-Nothing Party first nominated for mayor a Catholic, Lucien Herman. Later, when the quasi ideologues recognized that Herman was German, the Know-Nothings substituted an "American." The more adept regular Democrats, through a revised charter, curtailed Know-Nothing incumbency and ushered the confused bigots out of office early.⁴⁹

Irish Catholic response to the presence and the rhetoric of the American Protective Association in San Francisco totally overshadowed the APA threat. The young Galway priest Father Peter C. Yorke took the lead and held it permanently. Early scholars who sympathetically reviewed Yorke's aggressive role stressed his imaginative, entertaining, and brutal treatment of the APA. My conclusion was that the APA in San Francisco seems to have taken no documented anti-Irish, anti-Catholic actions. Their threat was verbal and poorly articulated at that.⁵⁰

The majority of the population was foreign born and children of the foreign born. By the census of 1900, San Francisco had a population of 343,000 of which 95,000 were Irish and 101,000 were German. The religious census of 1906, also, was telling. Of a city population that exceeded a third of a million, only 143,000 were churchgoers. Surprisingly, 116,000 were Catholics, and only 22,000 were Protestants of all denominations. San Francisco, according to statistics, was largely irreligious. Where religion was counted, it definitely was Catholic. In any stand-up contest between the APA and combined Catholic-immigrant interests, the APA would be outnumbered by five-to-one. To stand publicly in favor of bigotry against the overwhelming majority was futile. Those who tried disregarded their new California environment. Where nativism thrived, older and better-established Americans held power, and the objects of bigotry were marginalized. But in a democratic society with free elections, campaigning against the vast majority was a fatal handicap. That was the burden of nativism in San Francisco.⁵¹

Father Yorke, by not understanding (or not accepting) California, approached the reverse image of American Protective Association, the “apes” and “little-read patriots” as he called them. His rout of San Francisco nativism was such an overkill, so enthusiastically received by his adherents, and so gratifying to his own ego, that Archbishop Riordan was thereafter unable to direct Yorke’s clerical career. When Yorke forced his archbishop to choose publicly between militancy and cooperation with ongoing San Francisco life, Riordan politely chose the progressive option.⁵²

In the end the archbishop, a harmonizer like his chief council McEnerney, removed Yorke from his positions of preferment—editor of the *Monitor* and chancellor of the archdiocese. Unaffected, the militant Yorke established his own newspaper, the *Leader*. Thereafter, Riordan denied Yorke preferment from Rome and fixed his permanent status as that of parish priest.⁵³ Yorke and his APA adversaries were both true believers who waged a war of the godly against the other. Given the city’s character—irreligious and Catholic; acquisitive, materialistic, and cosmopolitan—both nativism and Irish militancy were hardly central to the course of San Francisco history. Misinterpreted, however, Father Yorke, the APA, and San Francisco could be confused with Bishop John Hughes, the Know-Nothings, and the New York model.⁵⁴

As late as the 1920s when intolerance and the Klan reawakened across America, as close as Oregon and pockets within California, San Francisco’s Irish Catholics had scant cause for concern. In a preemptive move, local leadership staged a massive demonstration, a parade up Market Street to the Civic Center. Ostensibly, it was to honor the holy name of Jesus and to welcome home Archbishop Edward J. Hanna from an Irish holiday. By exhibiting San Francisco’s Catholic and Irish numbers, augmented by parishioners drawn in from Northern California, archdiocesan organizers simply traded on the long-established demographic and cultural realities of San Francisco. Within an environment of such diversity, only the Catholic Church could ensure such a turn out. The Irish Catholic message was that if the nativists left them undisturbed, metropolitan tolerance could extend even to the Klan, as long as it remained ineffectual.⁵⁵

San Francisco's historic isolation combined with the enormity of California wealth, also, contributed to Irish good fortune. Simply being present in such a cash-rich, labor-poor society constituted advantage. Until the transcontinental railway's completion in 1869, no adequate labor supply existed for San Francisco, and the importation of eastern strikebreakers was impossible. Even after 1869, time delays and anti-scab reception parties retarded strikebreaking and enhanced San Francisco's reputation as a union town. Labor benefited additionally by San Francisco's status as an instant city with a prevailing temporary mentality—make your strike and return home. Poorly constructed and hardly equipped to fight fire, San Francisco burned repeatedly. At moments of crisis, Irish teamsters attended the highest bidders, those desperate to save furnishings and art from their doomed homes.⁵⁶ More reliable incomes came from the building trades, not the teamsters.

The prize for Irish gall and aplomb belonged to union organizer and future mayor Patrick Henry McCarthy. Born in the Limerick countryside, McCarthy organized and led the San Francisco Building Trades Council for twenty-four years. His basic strategy in San Francisco's inflation-prone economy was to cut a deal with the employers, raise the prices, and share the profits among union members. The employers cooperated once they learned the routine. During an early strike, the mill owners' association, reacting by rote, locked out McCarthy's union men. He responded by using the union treasury to construct the union's own mill and, thus, bypassed the employers' monopoly on building supplies. Not only did McCarthy break the lockout, he forced union membership within the very employers' association that locked them out.⁵⁷

The region's combination of isolation, wealth, and Irish leadership facilitated Irish assimilation even though those at the very top might not care. Those of great wealth and prominence included the Donahue brothers in manufacturing and utilities,⁵⁸ the Sullivans and Tobins in banking,⁵⁹ Rioridan and Hanna in real estate and religion, McEnerney in law, and the Phelans in most everything else except mining. The Irish big four overwhelmed the latter industry through their ownership and production control of Nevada silver. The silver kings—John W. Mackay, James Fair, James C. Flood, and William S. O'Brien—acquired their valuable mining properties at modest prices, discovered the Comstock (a vein fifty-four feet in width), and manipulated the San Francisco stock exchange for two decades. En route, the Irish main-chancers ranked among the richest men in the world. Mackay's income reportedly peaked at twenty-five dollars a minute on the twenty-four hour clock. Yet, when proposing marriage, he took the precaution of letting his prospective wife know that if mining went bad, "I can always dig a living with my bare hands."⁶⁰

For the less advantaged immigrants, though, economic life was also better in San Francisco. By the third quarter of the nineteenth century, San Francisco had become the tenth largest city in the nation. In total Irish presence, New York was first with Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, St. Louis, and San Francisco following. By 1870, the size of the Irish work forces of San Francisco, Boston, and



FIGURE 6-3 Original Phelan Building (1882–1906) at Market and O'Farrell Streets, San Francisco.

Photo credit: The Bancroft Library.

Philadelphia were correlated by an increasing factor of one. Boston had twice the availability as San Francisco, and Philadelphia had almost three times that number. Within this matrix, San Francisco exceeded in absolute numbers each larger Irish-American community in its number of select, prestigious, and highly remunerative occupations. San Francisco listed twenty-seven Irish-born bankers and brokers while the much larger Philadelphia had eighteen. Boston had four.⁶¹

Conversely, statistics on traditional low-status, low-paying occupations suggest the same overall conclusion. Boston, with twice the Irish work force of San Francisco, approached three times the number of Irish laborers and domestic servants. Philadelphia's general distribution was similar to San Francisco's—more domestic servants and fewer laborers.⁶²

The classic Irish models of urban politics are the political machine personified by New York's Tammany Hall and the tribal chieftain personified by Boston's James Michael Curley. Tammany was powerful, hierarchical, pervasive, enduring, and alternately (some would say simultaneously) enlightened and corrupt. When the non-office-holding Tammany boss Charles Murphy disagreed with New York Governor William Sulzer about the distribution of patronage among Tammany's army of party loyalists, Murphy ordered Sulzer impeached and removed from statewide office. Murphy succeeded because of his pervasive control of members of the state legislature. Murphy was a boss, and Tammany was his machine.⁶³

Boston's Curley did not inherit a machine, and he lacked the temperament necessary to construct one. Instead, he was born to opportunity, opportunity based upon a growing, new-majority Irish Catholic electorate—those with seething grievance against their betters and their own competitors. With charm, guile, opportunism, and tribal loyalty, Curley rode the darker social forces of alienation and resentment. And his people loved him for doing so.⁶⁴



FIGURE 6-4 Second (Post-Fire) Phelan Building (1908–) at Market and O'Farrell Streets, San Francisco. *Photo credit: Villa Montalvo.*

The culture and history of San Francisco allowed for neither the Irish machine nor the charismatic chieftain. At first glance, United States Senator David C. Broderick might be mistaken for either. He bluntly rejected the lock-step mentality of the Tammany machine. Another voluntary immigrant, he characteristically chose California for its openness and its opportunities. Intentionally and with calculation, he traded New York for San Francisco “because I was tired of the jealousies of men of my class, who could not understand why one of their fellows should seek to elevate his condition above the common level.”⁶⁵

In California, Broderick attained his goal, a seat in the United States Senate in 1857. He was the first Irish American to be so honored. Likewise, San Francisco elected Irish-born Frank McCoppin as its mayor in 1867, eighteen years before Boston accepted Hugh O'Brien and thirteen years before New York placed William P. Grace in city hall. Access was quicker and easier as the Roscommon man John G. Downey also discovered. He became the first Irish-born Catholic to govern any state in the Union—California in 1860.⁶⁶

The newness and the openness of California were part of the explanation of the early success of Irish political leadership. The shifting balances of cultural diversity and careers available beyond politics explain the ebbs and flows.

High-profile leader James Duval Phelan served three terms in city hall and advanced his elevated version of the California dream—beauty, grandeur, and progress. Out of office, he supported the prosecution of those who perverted his lofty dreams regardless of ethnicity, class, or religion. Patrick H. McCarthy, the labor leader turned centralist politician aimed not so high. He wanted to open up San Francisco and make it the “Paris of the West.” Neither Irish political leader endured like Tammany nor abused like Curley. And in both cases, when the cosmopolitan ethos within which they functioned tired of them, others (non-Irish) assumed their places. The Irish electorate even helped set aside both Phelan and McCarthy. Phelan wisely declined a fourth term. In electing James R. Rolph in 1911, McCarthy's Irish neighbors helped to replace him with the American son of English-Scottish immigrants. “Sunny Jim” Rolph's brand of San Francisco inclusiveness was so warm and so broad that only he could glory in his alleged public greeting: “Brother Knights [of Columbus] and fellow Masons.” The Irish supported Rolph and his assimilationist propulsions

through five terms. They did so because the Anglo mayor respected their interests and because they were in San Francisco.⁶⁷

Ethnic political dominance was never an Irish priority in San Francisco, correctly so given a society so diverse and so fluid from the start. Because they never subsisted by politics or on its leavings, the San Francisco Irish never lamented loss of control. As a strong but not commanding player in city politics, the Irish appreciated success and understood failure. Unlike New York after generations of Tammany's control, the San Francisco Irish had little to lament.⁶⁸ Unlike Boston, the San Francisco Irish never had a grievance or an absolute electoral majority and, thus, without cause or opportunity did not revert to tribalism.

Given California's abundance and their own newfound opportunities, the Irish were poor critics of what they discovered. In Ireland, where everyone was white, the Irish had no exposure to racism even though the English overlords considered them a lower human form.⁶⁹ In California, the Irish immigrants met what for them was a previously unencountered race. Also in California, they met a variety of racism, and rather than share their new equality, the Irish offered leadership to California's Asian exclusion movements.⁷⁰

The anti-Chinese, anti-capitalist harangues of Denis Kearney, sandlot orator and leader of the Workingmen's Party of California, are merely the best known. What entitled a recently arrived Corkonian to demand, "The Chinese must go," no white man publicly asked. Less public, but no less real, San Francisco customs collector E. L. Sullivan regularly rerouted Chinese women immigrants back to Hong Kong by arbitrarily declaring them to be prostitutes. Simultaneously, Irish abused and killed Chinese peddlers.⁷¹

Father Yorke was vehemently exclusive in his militant advocacy of Irish Catholic labor. He promulgated papal teachings with a pro-labor interpretation and intervened effectively on behalf of unions during critical strikes.⁷² Though ordained and, therefore, ineligible for public office, Yorke was San Francisco's closest alternative to Boston's Curley. He was outrageous, and he appeared to enjoy being so. On the subject of California's anti-Asian racism, Yorke accepted what he discovered in San Francisco, and he led his admirers to greater ignominy. He debased the quality of intellectual life, and he did so on a near weekly basis in his personal paper, the *Leader*, which found its way into the Irish Catholic homes.

The "Asiatic's opportunity," according to Yorke, sprang from the yellow man's ability to live on "much less than the white man—and therefore is willing to work for less. This state of affairs would be all right if the Asiatics were slaves whose numbers might be regulated. . . . There is no way in which one race can live in the midst of another except as master and slave."⁷³ Yorke supported the Chinese Exclusion Bill in 1902 because "God has reserved California as a home for a free people and a Christian Civilization." And "in the event of an uprising of the yellow millions, California is a frontier province."⁷⁴

Yorke editorialized in his *Leader* that not only was “the coolie or his race” unassailable, Asians were guilty of each of the xenophobic charges previously hurled at the Irish. Yorke appropriated the very APA indictments he had earlier refuted as bigotry, and he reapplied them as if they were genuine.⁷⁵ In doing so, Yorke mirrored the near-universal contemporary assumption: California was, and was to remain, a white man’s country.

James Duval Phelan, a patrician in politics, pinned his career to the same assumption. The difference was in its articulation. Phelan sought to preserve California as a white man’s country, a “homogeneous commonwealth,” as he preferred to say. Phelan accepted that the Japanese were “efficient human machines,” and “as such, they are a menace to our prosperity and happiness.”⁷⁶ Phelan took credit for the inclusion of the anti-Oriental plank in the 1912 Democratic Party platform. After his election to the U.S. Senate in 1914, he remained a focal point of anti-Asian sentiment.

California’s most noted Irish Americans absorbed the region’s racism and turned it to their purposes. Even the religious and progressive, Peter C. Yorke and James Duval Phelan, could not accept that peoples from divergent cultures might, like themselves, be co-founders of a culturally diverse society.⁷⁷

By accepting California’s welcome, the Irish became Californians, no less and no more. Their specific location in western space, however, was not the cause of their satisfying acculturation. Their experience, so historically different from what the Irish encountered elsewhere in America, was the cause. And although California made the Irish different, it hardly made them flawless.

Notes

1. James P. Walsh and Timothy J. O’Keefe, *Legacy of a Native Son: James Duval Phelan & Villa Montalvo* (Los Gatos, CA: Forbes Mill Press, 1993), 1; Emily Wortis Leider, *California’s Daughter: Gertrude Atherton and Her Times* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 204–212.
2. James P. Walsh, “James Phelan: Creating the Fortune, Creating the Family,” *Journal of the West*, 31 (April 1992), 17–23; “Father and Son: Educating Each Other,” in *Legacy of a Native Son*, 15–32.
3. The subject matter of the California dream continues to be explored by Kevin Starr through his ongoing series published by Oxford University Press: *Americans and the California Dream* (1973), *Inventing the Dream* (1985), *Material Dreams* (1990), *Endangered Dreams* (1996), *The Dream Endures* (1997), and *Embattled Dreams* (2002).
4. The early treatment was by William V. Shannon, *The American Irish* (New York: Macmillan, 1963). In response to my inquiry as to why his chapter on the Irish on the Pacific Coast was so cursory, he replied that he was just unable to come to grips with the Irish experience there. It was different. Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford, 1985), fashioned the debate over which were the American Irish, emigrants or exiles. Regional environments were not significant factors. For my review, see *The Journal of American History*, 73 (June 1986), 204–205.

A six-hour documentary entitled “The Irish in America: Long Journey Home,” produced by the Lennon Documentary Group, New York (aired as a miniseries on KQED TV9, January 26, 27, 28, 1998), declined to deal with the San Francisco-California story. Director Mark Zwonitzer’s American theme was that the Irish did not fit. The California story, as an exception to the theme, remained unaddressed.

5. Shannon, *American Irish*; and the Lennon Documentary Group, “Irish in America.”
6. Walton Bean, *Boss Ruef’s San Francisco: The Story of the Union Labor Party, Big Business, and the Graft Prosecution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952).
7. The Irish Literary and Historical Society (San Francisco) sponsored symposia 23 April 1971 and 31 May 1974 during which the most senior participatory members of the Irish community shared their family and community experiences. I chaired the sessions. Two participants, pre-World War I activist and attorney John J. Taheny and former Matson Line officer Philip O’Rourke claimed they had been discriminated against because they were Irish. Further discussion revealed that Taheny was citing the litany history of victimization in America, which he had read, though not his experience. O’Rourke had been vigorously questioned by the FBI after blaming England for starting the Korean War. He did this while at sea in the Pacific at the war’s onset. The FBI represented the federal government, not San Francisco. Former Chief of Police Thomas Cahill thought San Francisco was the best city in the world. Former Christian Brother Edward T. Hannon pointed out that the archbishop’s office always found work for his father. Vincent Hallinan, in an interview for his biography (James P. Walsh, *San Francisco’s Hallinan: Toughest Lawyer in Town* [Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982]) stated, “We are a warm and compassionate people with a gift for expression and a stamina for hard work. Given the history of San Francisco, who could stand in our way?” See also Séamus Breatnac, “Irish Need Not Apply,” *San Francisco*, 27 (March, 1985), 41.
8. Early accounts of the Irish in the West, such as Thomas F. Prendergast’s *Forgotten Pioneers: Irish Leaders in Early California* (San Francisco: Trade Pressroom, 1942), were too focused; others, such as Hugh Quigley’s *The Irish Race in California and on the Pacific Coast* (San Francisco: A. Roman, 1878), were too creative to help.
9. Patrick J. Dowling, *California: The Irish Dream* (San Francisco: Golden Gate, 1988) and *Irish Californians: Historic, Benevolent, Romantic* (San Francisco: Scottwall Associates, 1998).
10. As Moses Rischin has highlighted, changing locations does not change identities. Alternative experiences do. See Rischin, “Beyond the Great Divide: Immigration and the Last Frontier,” *Journal of American History*, 55 (June 1968), 53.
11. See Bibliography for a full list of these publications.
12. Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1951) and *Boston’s Immigrants, 1790–1865: A Study in Acculturation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1941).
13. Robert Ernst, *Immigrant Life in New York City, 1825–1863* (New York: King’s Crown Press, 1949).
14. Earl F. Niehaus, *The Irish in New Orleans, 1800–1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965).
15. Stephan Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth-Century City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964) and *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880–1970* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973).

16. Thomas N. Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism, 1870–1890* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1966).
17. Handlin provided a summary picture, “Encounters with Evidence,” in his second edition of *The Uprooted* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973). Reviews of Irish-American literature include Kerby A. Miller, “Emigrants and Exiles: Irish Cultures and Irish Emigration to North America 1790–1922,” *Irish Historical Studies*, XXII (September 1980), 97–125; Seamus P. Metress, *The Irish-American Experience: A Guide to the Literature* (Washington DC: University Press of America, 1981); R. A. Burchell, “The Historiography of the American Irish,” *Immigrants & Minorities*, 1 (November 1982), 281–305; David Noel Doyle, “The Regional Bibliography of Irish America, 1800–1930: A Review and Addendum,” *Irish Historical Studies*, 13 (May 1983), 254–283; D. H. Akenson, “An Agnostic View of the Historiography of the Irish-Americans,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 14 (Fall 1984), 123–159; Michael F. Funchion, “Irish-America: An Essay on the Literature Since 1970,” *Immigration History Newsletter*, 17 (November 1985), 1–8.
18. William L. Riordon (Ed.), *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall: A Series of Very Plain Talks on Very Practical Politics* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995). See particularly “How to Become a Statesman,” and “Tammany Leaders Not Bookworms.”
19. Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 262–293; Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher (Eds.), *The New York Irish* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press: 1996), 335–336, 342–343.
20. John Tracy Ellis, *American Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 82–83, 148–149.
21. John Tracy Ellis, *American Catholics and the Intellectual Life* (Chicago: Heritage Foundation, 1956). See also Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 273.
22. Daniel P. Moynihan, “When the Irish Ran New York,” *Reporter*, 24 (June 8, 1961), 32–34; Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians and Irish of New York City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1963), 221–238; Nancy Joan Weiss, *Charles Francis Murphy, 1858–1924: Respectability and Responsibility in Tammy Politics* (Northampton, MA: Smith College, 1968); Elmer E. Cornwell, Jr., “Bosses, Machines, Ethnic Groups,” *The Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 353 (May, 1964), 28–29; Edward M. Levine, *The Irish and Irish Politicians: A Study of Cultural and Social Alienation* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1966), 101–107.
23. Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *The Irish Diaspora in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 66. For my review, see *The Catholic Historical Review*, LXIII (October 1977), 649–650.
24. Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism*, 165–177, 180–182.
25. The organization of the American Committee (now Conference) for Irish Studies under the early leadership of Lawrence J. McCaffrey and Emmet Larkin provided professional opportunity and encouragement for research scholarship in this field. San Francisco’s perpetual patron of all ethnic histories was and remains Moses Rischin whose Irish composition, “Introduction: The Classic Ethnics,” introduced bicentennial essays in James P. Walsh (Ed.), *The San Francisco Irish, 1850–1976* (San Francisco: Irish Literary and Historical Society, 1978), 1–6.
26. Patrick Walsh (Galway, 1902–San Francisco 1982); Michael Folan (Galway, 1916–).
27. I was seated between a social theorist from Damascus with a Berkeley Ph.D. and a San José attorney with a biracial family. See also Thomas H. O’Connor, *The Boston Irish: A Political History* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995), 281–283.

28. Franklin Hichborn, *"The System," as Uncovered by the San Francisco Graft Prosecution* (San Francisco: Press of the James H. Barry Company, 1915).
29. In his widely adopted college textbook Bean displayed enthusiasm for the Tammany interpretation. See Walton Bean, *California: An Interpretive History*, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978), 111–115. For doubts, see Doyce B. Nunis (Ed.), *San Francisco Vigilance Committee of 1856* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Westerners, 1971), 13.
30. For a comprehensive analysis, see James P. Walsh, "Abe Ruef Was No Boss: Machine Politics, Reform, and San Francisco," *California Historical Quarterly*, 51 (Spring 1972).
31. James P. Walsh, "American-Irish: West and East," *Éire-Ireland*, 6 (Summer 1971), 27–30.
32. Walsh, "American-Irish: West and East," 28–30.
33. An extensive literature of this mythology exists. The entry point is Garci Rodriguez de Montalvo, *The Labors of the Very Brave Knight Esplandián*, translated by William Thomas Little (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1992), 456, 478–504. For the Irish claim to the name "California," see Conor Murphy, "Derivation of California," *Cork Historical and Archaeological Society Journal*, 18 (1912), 97–102.
34. Dowling, *Irish Californians*, 448–450.
35. Dowling, *Irish Californians*, 1–6.
36. Sister Gabrielle Sullivan, *Martin Murphy Jr.: California Pioneer, 1844–1884* (Stockton, CA: University of the Pacific, 1974), 1–28.
37. Dowling, *California*, 223–237.
38. John W. Caughey, *California* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1960), 277–278.
39. J. S. Holliday, *The World Rushed In: The California Gold Rush Experience* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981).
40. Walsh, *San Francisco Irish*, 9. Hays provided to the state the land on which the University of California began. Frontier novelist Louis L'Amour cited Hays as the first to kill an antagonist using the quick-draw in 1836 when Hays was 19. See L'Amour, *Bowdrie's Law* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984), 24.
41. Walsh, "James Phelan," 17–18.
42. Walsh, *San Francisco Irish*, 11–12; Sherman L. Richards and George M. Blackburn, "Demographic Analysis of the Sydney Ducks," *Pacific Historical Review*, 9 (December 1940), 20–31; Doris M. Wright, "Making of Cosmopolitan California," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, 19 (December 1940), 332–340, and 20 (March 1941), 73.
43. James P. Walsh, "The Irish in the New America, 'Way Out West,'" in David Noel Doyle and Owen Dudley Edwards (Eds.), *America and Ireland, 1776–1976: The American Identity and the Irish Connection* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 168–170.
44. Walton Bean and James J. Rawls, *California: An Interpretive History*, 5th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988), 32.
45. *Monitor*, 17 April 1869 as quoted in R. A. Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish, 1848–1880* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 4; Walsh, "The Irish in the New America," 171–172; James P. Walsh, "Varieties of Irish America: A New Home in San Francisco," in Blanche M. Touhill (Ed.), *Varieties of Ireland, Varieties*

- of Irish-America* (St. Louis: University of Missouri, St. Louis, 1976), 49. Four factors in my development of the San Francisco Irish thesis were introduced in a paper for the 1976 meeting of the American Committee for Irish Studies, St. Louis. In summary form, they appear in Touhill, *Varieties*, 51.
46. See John B. McGloin, *California's First Archbishop: The Life of Joseph Sodoc Alemany, 1814–1888* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966); James P. Gaffey, *Citizen of No Mean City: Archbishop Patrick Riordan of San Francisco* (Wilmington, DE: Consortium Books, 1976). In 1899, Riordan's eleven-year report to Rome was found so satisfactory that the Vatican proclaimed San Francisco "a true paradise in which everything flourishes." See also Bradford Luckingham, "Immigrant Life in Emergent San Francisco," *Journal of the West* 12 (October 1973).
 47. James P. Walsh, *Ethnic Militancy: An Irish-Catholic Prototype* (San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1972), 100–110; John Riordan, "Garret McEnerney and the Pursuit of Success," in Walsh, *San Francisco Irish*, 73–84.
 48. Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800–1860* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1964); John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925* (New York: Atheneum, 1965).
 49. Walsh, "The Irish in the New America," 172. See also Peyton Hurt, "The Rise and Fall of the 'Know-Nothings' in California," *California Historical Quarterly*, 9 (June 1930), 108, 117.
 50. David J. Herlihy, "Battle Against Bigotry: Father Peter C. Yorke and the American Protective Association in San Francisco, 1893–1897," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, 62 (June 1951); Joseph S. Brusher, "Peter C. Yorke and the APA in San Francisco," *Catholic Historical Review*, 37 (July 1951). For Brusher's concluding view, see *Consecrated Thunderbolt: A Life of Father Peter C. Yorke of San Francisco* (Hawthorne, NJ: Joseph F. Wagner, 1973). My review appeared in *The Catholic Historical Review*, 62 (July, 1976), 515–516. See also James P. Walsh, "Peter C. Yorke: San Francisco's Irishman Reconsidered," in Walsh, *San Francisco Irish*, 43–57.
 51. James P. Walsh, "Machine Politics, Reform, and San Francisco," in Walsh, *San Francisco Irish*, 64; James P. Walsh, "Father Peter Yorke of San Francisco," *Studies: Irish Quarterly Review*, 62 (Spring, 1973), 22.
 52. Walsh and O'Keefe, *Legacy of a Native Son*, 70–72; James P. Walsh and Timothy Foley, "Father Peter C. Yorke: Irish-American Leader," *Studia Hibernica*, 14 (1974), 100–103.
 53. See Walsh, *San Francisco Irish*, 55, note 15.
 54. Bishop John Hughes of New York, confronted with the threat of nativist violence and governmental inaction, set armed guards at diocesan properties and told city authorities that if his churches were set afire, New York would resemble Moscow after Napoleon. See Ellis, *American Catholicism*, 66–67.
 55. *San Francisco Chronicle*, 6 October 1924.
 56. Walsh, "Varieties of Irish America," 47, 53 note 17.
 57. Bean, *Boss Ruef's*, 13.
 58. Richard H. Dillon, *Iron Men: California's Industrial Pioneers Peter, James, and Michael Donahue* (Point Richmond, CA: Candela Press, 1984).
 59. The family of Francis J. Sullivan, James D. Phelan's brother-in-law, participated with the Tobin family in the organization and direction of the Hibernia Bank. See Séamus Breatnac, "Should Irish Eyes Be Smiling?" *San Francisco*, 12 (August 1970), 28.
 60. Caughey, *California*, 72–73; Walsh, "The Irish in the New America," 168.

61. James P. Walsh, "Varieties of Irish America," 46. As an exception to the trend, Philadelphia had forty Irish doctors. For further context, see Dennis Clark, *The Irish in Philadelphia: Ten Generations of Urban Experience* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973).
62. *United States Census Office, Statistics of a Population, Ninth Census, 1870* (Washington, D.C.: 1872), 389, 778, 794, 799.
63. Weiss, *Charles Francis Murphy*, 55–59.
64. Thomas H. O'Connor, *Boston Irish*, 193–196, 202–215. In novel form, see Edwin O'Connor, *The Last Hurrah* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1956).
65. Quoted in David A. Williams, *David C. Broderick: A Political Portrait* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1969), 30.
66. Rischin, "Classic Ethnics," 5–6; Dowling, *California*, 61, 66–71.
67. L. A. O'Donnell, *Irish Voice and Organized Labor in America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 109–112; William Issel and Robert Cherny, *San Francisco, 1865–1932: Politics, Power and Urban Development* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 163–165; Moses Rischin, "Sunny Jim Rolph: The First 'Mayor of All the People,'" *California Historical Quarterly*, 52 (Summer 1974), 165–172. John J. Taheny, remarks before Irish Literary and Historical Society (San Francisco), 31 May 1974.
68. Bayor and Meagher (Eds.), *New York Irish*, 536–538.
69. Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *Ireland: From Colony to Nation State* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1979), 20–21; James P. Walsh, "Irish Racism: Neither Here Nor There?" *Social Studies: Irish Journal of Sociology*, 2 (October–November 1973), 499–508.
70. Relevant studies include Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
71. Walsh, *Ethnic Militancy*, 25.
72. Brusher, *Consecrated Thunderbolt*, 57–69. See also Bernard C. Cronin, *Father Yorke and the Labor Movement in San Francisco, 1900–1910* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1943), 87, 164–166.
73. Walsh, *Ethnic Militancy*, 24.
74. Walsh, *Ethnic Militancy*, 23.
75. Walsh, *Ethnic Militancy*, 23–27.
76. Quoted in Bean and Rawls, *California*, 260.
77. Walsh and O'Keefe, *Legacy of a Native Son*, 189–191. Yorke and Phelan displayed tolerance of African Americans. Yorke accepted and advanced the childlike interpretation of the day, but felt that being members of the Catholic Church would best protect African Americans. The church should reach out for their conversion and inclusion. Phelan retained an African American on his senatorial campaign staff and respectfully solicited African American votes. He was a student of Native American and Hispanic cultures, advanced Native American interests in the U.S. Senate and celebrated Spanish California in the visual, literary, and performing arts.

The Irish record of leadership and public example through San Francisco's first hundred years was not entirely racist. At the start and the conclusion, notable Irish Americans did take the higher ground.

Senator David C. Broderick defended the cause of African Americans in California and in the U.S. Senate. A century later noted attorney and Progressive Party activist Vincent Hallinan campaigned for President of the United States with an African-American woman, Charlotta A. Bass, as his vice-presidential running mate. He also provided legal defense to unpopular Black militants. Likewise, activist matriarch Vivian Hallinan protested employment discrimination against African Americans to the point of being arrested. See Walsh, *San Francisco's Hallinan*, 202, 247–249.

In Memoriam
Donald E. Jordan, Jr. (1945–2003)

ROBERT TRACY

 Don Jordan, a founder and past president of the American Conference for Irish Studies—West, died at home on 17 November 2003. His wife Marean and son Alex were with him and describe his death as peaceful. Don was Vice President for Academic Affairs and Professor of History and Humanities at Menlo College, in Menlo, California.

Much in Don's life is defined by his interest in Ireland and by his warm relationship with Ireland and with Irish people. His interest was initially a professional interest—his specialty was Irish history, especially the history of the Irish west. But it was equally a human interest in all things Irish.

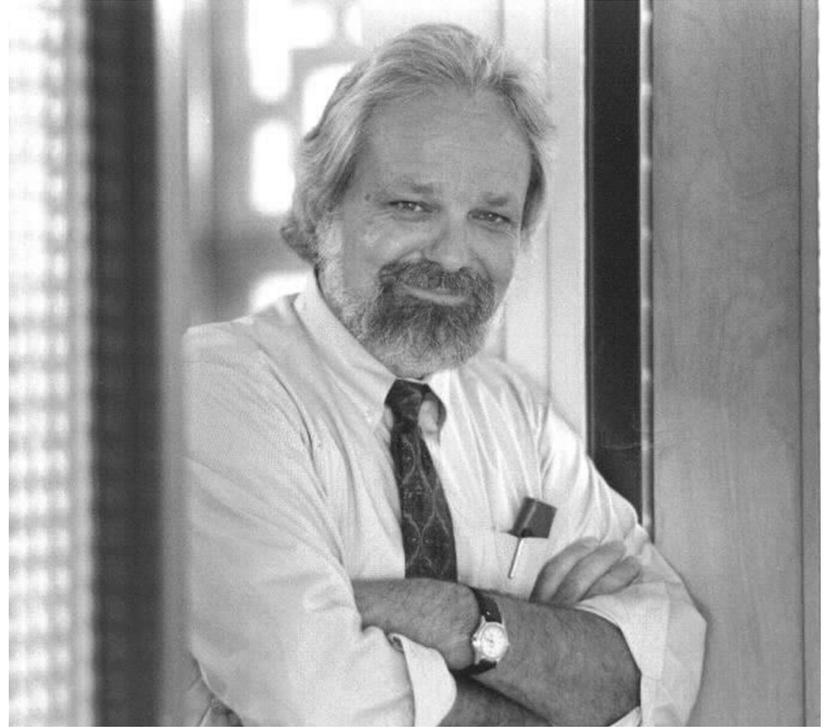
Don was the author of *Land and Popular Politics in Ireland: County Mayo from the Plantation to the Land War* (Cambridge University Press, 1994). As the title suggests, his book is a study of the vexing issue of land ownership in the west of Ireland. It explores the relationship between the tenant farmers' anomalous state and their political awakening. Farming land they could not own, and from which they could easily be dispossessed, they gradually came to recognize themselves as a potential political force. In so doing, they played a major role in the development of modern Irish nationalism by creating a sense of Irish rather than merely local identity in the Irish west.

Don was a real historian, his ideas based on long and careful archival work with rent rolls and local country newspapers. His book shows us how the Land War at the end of the 1870s was crucial to the development of Irish Nationalism when, under the leadership of Michael Davitt and Charles Stuart Parnell, the demand for tenants' rights coalesced with the parliamentary Home Rule campaign. Clearly and sensitively written, *Land and Popular Politics in Ireland* immediately became a basic text for historians of Ireland. By the time he wrote it, Don had become both an insider and an outsider. He had come to understand—to acquire a feel for—

Robert Tracy is professor emeritus, University of California, Berkeley, and an officer of the Irish Literary and Historical Society.

FIGURE 6-5 Donald E. Jordan, Jr.,
June 28, 1945–November 17, 2003.

Photo credit: Menlo College.



Irish history, including Irish local history, while retaining the objectivity necessary for a historian. These strengths are also evident in his articles and conference papers.

Apart from the personal sense of loss which his many friends and colleagues feel, those of us interested in Irish matters regret the articles and books and conversations of which his early death has deprived us. Don never felt that his work was finished. He was always aware of new possibilities, new interpretations, new ideas, and new questions to be examined and discussed. Don had a marvelous feel for the past, especially the Irish past. He had a rare sensitivity to the ways in which past and present Irish people think and behave.

While contributing as he did to the field of Irish history, Don made a major contribution to the professional development of Irish studies in the American west. He was a co-founder, and later served as treasurer and president of the Western division American Conference for Irish Studies. Over the last twenty-five years, he has been a genial and informed presence at our annual gatherings, especially encouraging to those giving a paper for the first time.

Don's professional commitment to the Irish past was matched by his moral commitment to the Irish present. For many years, he was an active member of the Irish Forum, a San Francisco institution dedicated to inviting expressions of all points of view about the ongoing crisis in Northern Ireland.

Tip O'Neill famously said that all politics is local. All history is local too, and it was fitting that Don, who explored the local history of Mayo, a small county in a small country, should serve for many years as a member and officer of the San Francisco Literary and Historical Soci-

ety. His regular presence and his ready and informed response to papers made our meetings memorable. He always felt a responsibility for encouraging discussion. In recent years, he had been editing this book of essays about the Irish in San Francisco, sponsored by the Irish Literary and Historical Society. He worked on the book as long as he could, editing contributions and riding herd on dilatory contributors. Thanks to his commitment and his great courage, the book was virtually complete when he died. It will remain a monument to Don's scholarship, to his tact, and to his commitment to the local, to the Irish community in San Francisco—another small western county.

Don's work took him regularly to Ireland, to Dublin, and his beloved Mayo. He was the best of companions for a journey, especially an Irish journey. Yeats once described John Synge as "that enquiring man," and celebrated Synge's love of Mayo and the Irish west in lines that seem to me also descriptive of Don:

Long traveling, he had come
 Towards nightfall upon certain set apart
 In a most desolate and stony place,
 Towards nightfall upon a race
 Passionate and simple like his heart.

In the coming summers, many people in Ireland will wonder at and regret his absence, and will miss his quiet humorous gentle presence—as will we all.