



From Famine to Five Points: Lord Lansdowne's Irish Tenants Encounter North America's Most Notorious Slum

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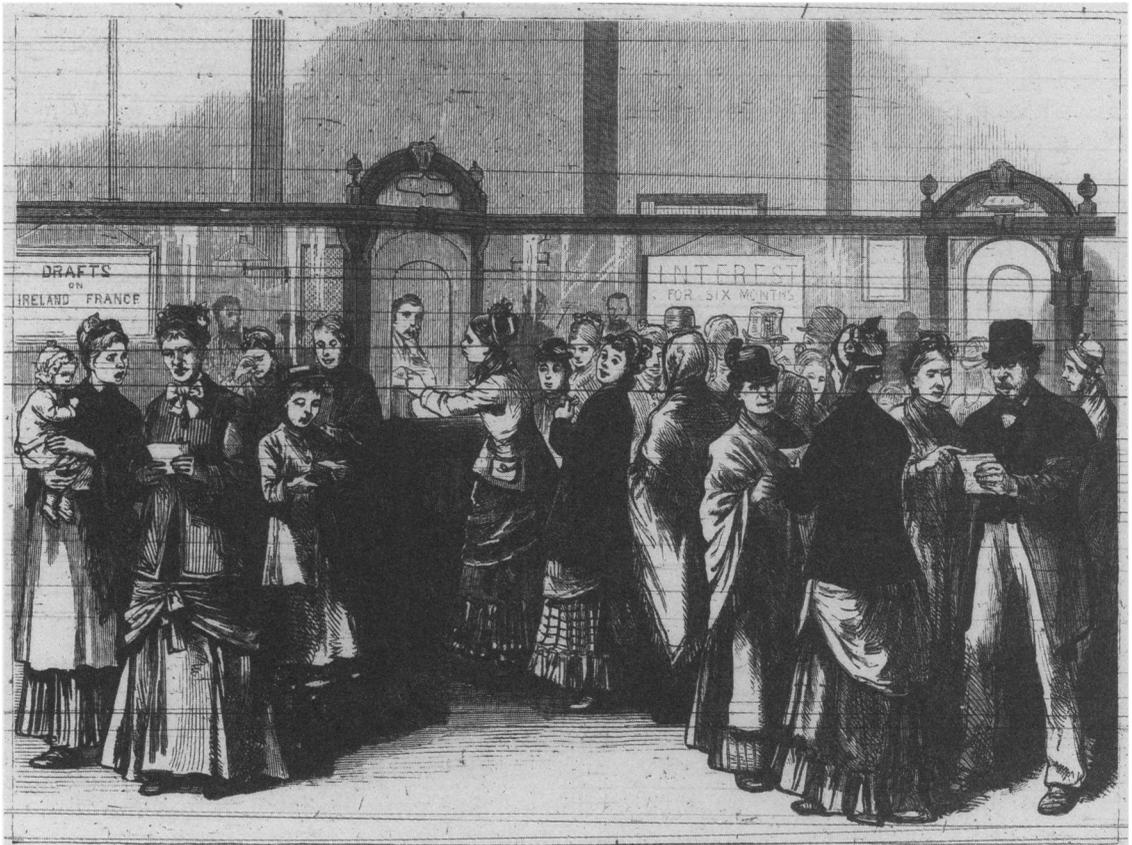
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NEW YORK CITY.—IRISH DEPOSITORS OF THE EMIGRANT SAVINGS BANK WITHDRAWING MONEY TO SEND TO THEIR SUFFERING RELATIVES IN THE OLD COUNTRY.—SEE PAGE 27.

From *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (March 13, 1880), p. 29: "New York City.—Irish depositors of the Emigrant Savings Bank withdrawing money to send to their suffering relatives in the old country." Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

From Famine to Five Points: Lord Lansdowne's Irish Tenants Encounter North America's Most Notorious Slum

TYLER ANBINDER

AS NEW YORKER ELLEN HOLLAND looked back over her first forty-seven years of life in 1860, she must have wondered whether she was blessed or cursed. "Nelly" had been born and raised in southwestern Ireland in the County Kerry parish of Kenmare. There she grew up surrounded by jagged mountain peaks and lush green hills that sloped dramatically to the wide, majestic Kenmare River. Nelly and her family were tenants of the marquis of Lansdowne, whose estate was home to 13,000 of the most impoverished residents of nineteenth-century Ireland. Visitors to the huge property commonly chose terms such as "wretched," "miserable," "half naked," and "half fed" to describe the poor farmers and laborers who dominated its population.¹

Observers invoked such descriptions of Nelly's birthplace even *before* 1845, when a mysterious potato blight began to wreak havoc on the meager food supply. By late 1846, Kenmare residents began to succumb to starvation and malnutrition-related diseases. As conditions continued to deteriorate in early 1847, the death toll multiplied. An Englishman who visited the town of Kenmare at this time wrote that "the sounds of woe and wailing resounded in the streets throughout the night." In the morning, nine corpses were found in the village streets. "The poor people came in from the rural districts" in such numbers, wrote this observer, "it was utterly impossible to meet their most urgent exigencies, and therefore they came in literally *to die*." Tens of thousands fled Ireland in 1847, but almost none of the Lansdowne tenants could afford to emigrate. Relatively few had journeyed from this isolated estate to America in the pre-famine years, so they did not receive the remittances from abroad that financed the voyages of many famine emigrants leaving other parts of Ireland.²

Although an abatement of the potato fungus in 1848 led British officials to declare the emergency over, such decrees meant nothing to Holland and others suffering in Kenmare. Most of Lansdowne's tenants were too weak to work or plant

I would like to thank Cormac O'Grada, Gerard J. Lyne, Richard Stott, Kevin Kenny, and Patrick Williams for commenting on earlier drafts of this essay.

¹ For the source of these quotations, see nn. 23 and 24 below.

² William Bennett, *Narrative of a Recent Journey of Six Weeks in Ireland* (London, 1847), 127–29. For the low emigration rate from Kerry during the famine, see S. H. Cousens, "The Regional Pattern of Emigration during the Great Irish Famine, 1846–1851," *Institute of British Geographers Transactions and Papers*, no. 28 (1960): 121.

and too destitute to buy seed potatoes. And what few tubers they did cultivate in 1849 were again ravaged by the dreaded fungus. Kenmare once more became the center of suffering in the region, with people “dying by the dozens in the streets.” Those on the brink of death crowded into the village workhouse, where, in return for giving up all of their worldly possessions, the starving received just barely enough food to keep them alive. By April 1849, the institution held 1,800 souls “in a house built for 500—without shoes, without clothes, in filth, rags and misery,” wrote Kenmare’s Roman Catholic archdeacon, John O’Sullivan. “The women squatted on the ground, on the bare cold clay floor and [were] so imprisoned for months . . . without as much as a stool to sit on.” One of these poor souls was Ellen Holland. She and her three sons, thirteen-year-old James, nine-year-old Thomas, and four-year-old George, were almost certainly among the institution’s inmates by that point. Her husband Richard remained outside the workhouse hoping to find employment. Or he may have been one of the hundreds of men authorities turned away, both for want of space and on the theory that men could more readily find paying work than women.³

Securing one of the coveted places in the Kenmare workhouse did not ensure survival. Hundreds died there during the famine from diseases that spread rapidly in the crowded, unsanitary institution. The food supply was so meager that some inmates died of starvation-related illnesses just hours after leaving the facility. Holland likely remained in the workhouse throughout 1849 and 1850, wondering how her life might ever return to normal, or if she and her sons would also fall victim to the unending cycle of disease and death. Nelly must have been elated, then, when Lansdowne’s estate agent announced in December 1850 that the marquis would finance the emigration of all his workhouse tenants who wished to depart. Holland and her sons were among the first to take advantage of the offer.

Her jubilation soon became tinged with despair, however, as the difficulties of the journey for such emaciated, ill-equipped voyagers became more apparent. Sailors were horrified when they first encountered the Lansdowne emigrants, reporting that in the half-decade since the onset of the famine they had never laid eyes on such wretched beings. The emigrants continued to suffer as they made their way across the Atlantic. The rags they wore provided woefully inadequate protection from the elements aboard a North Atlantic sailing ship in the dead of winter. Holland’s vessel, the *Montezuma*, had to detour around an iceberg and huge swaths of “field ice” during its voyage, giving some indication of the frigid conditions she and her shipmates endured. And although Lansdowne’s agent had paid for the emigrants’ tickets, he did not supply his charges with the foodstuffs that the typical Irish emigrant brought on a transatlantic voyage. Subsisting on just one pound of flour or meal and thirteen ounces of water each day during thirty-nine

³ Gerard J. Lyne, “William Steuart Trench and the Post-Famine Emigration from Kenmare to America, 1850–1855,” *Journal of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society* 25 (1992): 72, 97. The composition of Holland’s family is based on the passenger manifest of the vessel that carried them to the United States. See Ira A. Glazier, ed., *The Famine Immigrants: Lists of Irish Immigrants Arriving at the Port of New York, 1846–1851*, 7 vols. (Baltimore, 1983–86), 6: 629. My belief that Holland must have been in the workhouse by late 1849 is based on the Lansdowne agent’s later statement that he chose as the first emigrants those who had been in the workhouse the longest. Because Holland was one of the first to leave under Lansdowne’s emigration program, she was probably in the workhouse by late 1849.

days at sea compounded the suffering that Holland and her Lansdowne shipmates had already endured at home.⁴

But Nelly was a strong woman, determined to build a better life for her family. Like most of the Lansdowne immigrants, she settled in New York's "Five Points" neighborhood, the most infamously decrepit slum in North America. There, surrounded by drunks, brothels, and other Irish immigrants, and living in one of the most squalid blocks of tenements in the world, Holland and her family set to work rebuilding their lives. After years of unemployment, they must have been eager and delighted to take even the lowly jobs available to them. Her husband Richard found work as a menial day laborer. Ellen became a washerwoman. The boys undoubtedly pitched in as well, for when Ellen opened an account at the Emigrant Savings Bank in September 1853, thirty months after her arrival in New York, she was able to deposit a substantial sum, \$110, equivalent to about \$2,350 today.⁵

Despite having accrued this significant nest egg in a relatively short period, Holland's struggles continued. By July 1855, both her husband and eldest son were dead. One might have expected her to dip into her savings to help make ends meet during such trying times, but Nelly did no such thing. In fact, despite losing her family's two primary breadwinners, by 1860 she had increased her bank balance to \$201.20 (more than \$4,200 today), a real feat for a widow who, just eight years earlier, had been on the brink of starvation and had lived the first thirty-eight years of her life in a land of chronic underemployment and hunger. More surprising still, among the hundreds of Lansdowne immigrants who came to New York—most, like Holland, arriving utterly destitute—such relative financial success was not all that unusual.⁶

Hundreds of thousands of men and women like Ellen Holland emigrated from Ireland to North America during the famine years. Yet, dramatic as her story may be, few such tales can be found in the historiography of the famine immigration to America. This has resulted to a large extent from the divided nature of Irish studies,

⁴ *New York Herald*, March 17, 1851 (report of the *Montezuma's* voyage and arrival).

⁵ My calculation of the current value of Holland's savings is based on the multiplier suggested by the U.S. Department of Labor's *Handbook of Labor Statistics*, available on the World Wide Web at <http://minneapolisfed.org/economy/calc/hist1800.html>, which suggests a multiplier of 21.34 to convert 1850 dollars into 2001 dollars. According to the Department of Labor's statistics, a dollar in 1860 was worth about the same amount in real terms as a dollar in 1850, due to the deflationary effects of the panics of 1854 and 1857. The department's figures are borne out by John J. McCusker, "How Much Is That in Real Money?" *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 101 (1991): 327–32, which suggests a multiplier of 16 to convert dollar amounts from the 1850s into 1991 dollars. Adjusting McCusker's figure to take into account inflation since 1991 (using the Consumer Price Index calculator at <http://minneapolisfed.org/economy/calc/cpihome.html>) brings virtually the identical result. All subsequent estimates of the current value of nineteenth-century monetary figures are based on the Department of Labor's conversion program. It is, I admit, very difficult to know whether or not to trust these conversion systems. They do not produce consistently satisfactory results. Nonetheless, I feel it is important to offer estimates, because without them, the monetary figures from the nineteenth century are meaningless to most modern readers. These estimates of the modern value of the Emigrant Savings Bank account balances are different from (and should be used in place of) those appearing in my book *Five Points* (New York, 2001). At the time *Five Points* went to press, I did not fully appreciate the impact of 1990s inflation on the Emigrant Savings Bank account information.

⁶ Accounts 5479 and 9445, Test Books and Account Ledgers, Emigrant Savings Bank Collection, New York Public Library. The bank collected genealogical information in its "test books" because a person wishing to make a withdrawal had to pass a biographical test in order to prove that he or she was truly the account holder.

as the best works in the field treat either the Irish or the American story but rarely follow the emigrants from Europe to America. A number of fine books have examined the conditions that drove about 2 million Irishmen to flee the Emerald Isle in the famine years, but these studies do not offer detailed accounts of their subjects' fates in America.⁷ The best works on the Irish in the United States likewise devote relatively little attention to Irish Americans' lives before they immigrated. David M. Emmons in *The Butte Irish* and Kevin Kenny in *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires* trace their protagonists to West Cork and West Donegal respectively, but the reader gets little sense of how individual lives changed.⁸ Studies of famine-era Irish immigration to Canada and England have followed the same historiographic pattern.⁹

Given the current trend toward "internationalizing" our study of history (both the *American Historical Review* and the *Journal of American History* have recently focused attention on this subject), one might imagine that studies of the Irish diaspora would have begun to compare their subjects' pre- and post-emigration lives more fully. Those who study the seventeenth and eighteenth-century "Atlantic World," for example, have produced a number of sophisticated and influential monographs that cross national boundaries, but this trend has had little impact on historians of immigration, the vast majority of whom study the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁰ Most sociologists, in contrast, have warmly embraced the concept of "transnationalism," arguing that modern means of communications and transportation have created a new breed of immigrant who simultaneously main-

⁷ Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York, 1985); James S. Donnelly, Jr., *The Land and the People of Nineteenth-Century Cork* (London, 1975); Robert J. Scally, *The End of Hidden Ireland: Rebellion, Famine, and Emigration* (New York, 1995); Ciarán Ó Murchadha, *Sable Wings over the Land: Ennis, County Clare, and Its Wider Community during the Great Famine* (Ennis, Ireland, 1998).

⁸ David M. Emmons, *The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875–1925* (Urbana, Ill., 1989); Kevin Kenny, *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires* (New York, 1998).

⁹ For Canada, see Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *Irish Emigration and Canadian Settlement: Patterns, Links, and Letters* (Toronto, 1990); Donald McKay, *Flight from Famine: The Coming of the Irish to Canada* (Toronto, 1990); Thomas P. Power, ed., *The Irish in Atlantic Canada, 1780–1900* (Fredericton, New Brunswick, 1991); Robert J. Grace, *The Irish in Quebec: An Introduction to the Historiography* (Sainte-Foy, Quebec, 1997). The literature on the Irish in England is far more vast. Among the best works are Lynn Hollen Lees, *Exiles of Erin: Irish Migrants in Victorian London* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1979); Frances Finnegan, *Poverty and Prejudice: A Study of Irish Immigrants in York, 1840–1875* (Cork, 1982); Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley, eds., *The Irish in the Victorian City* (London, 1985); Swift and Gilley, eds., *The Irish in Britain, 1815–1939* (London, 1989); Swift and Gilley, eds., *The Irish in Victorian Britain: The Local Dimension* (Dublin, 1999); W. J. Lowe, *The Irish in Mid-Victorian Lancashire: The Shaping of a Working-Class Community* (New York, 1989); Donald MacRaild, *Culture, Conflict, and Migration: The Irish in Victorian Cumbria* (Liverpool, 1998).

¹⁰ *AHR Forum*: "Crossing Slavery's Boundaries," *AHR* 105 (April 2000): 451–84; "The Nation and Beyond," a special issue on "transnational history," *Journal of American History* 86 (1999): 965 and following. The best-known practitioner of Atlantic history is Bernard Bailyn, both through his book *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York, 1986) and through his long-running seminar on the Atlantic world. See Bailyn, "The Idea of Atlantic History," Working Paper 96–01, International Seminar on the History of the Atlantic World, 1500–1800. See also David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735–1785* (New York, 1995); W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge, 1997); Alison Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World* (Cambridge, 1999); and one study related to Ireland, Nicholas P. Canny, *Kingdom and Colony: Ireland in the Atlantic World, 1560–1800* (Baltimore, 1988).

tains strong ties to two lands.¹¹ Historians, justifiably skeptical about claims that contemporary immigrants are so different from their predecessors, have been reluctant to jump onto the transnational bandwagon. Those interested in immigration and ethnicity have instead focused on issues such as “whiteness” (exemplified by Noel Ignatiev’s provocative *How the Irish Became White*), nativism, and other aspects of cultural history.¹² Research on the Irish elsewhere has followed the same trends, although a recent survey of the field in England lamented that “the academic study of the Irish in Britain continues to lag far behind its counterpart in the United States.” Even the appearance of a six-book series entitled “The Irish World Wide,” while significant, did not portend any sea change in Irish historiography, as virtually every essay in the collection looked at the Irish in a single town or city. The 150th anniversary of the famine did produce a surge in publications on that subject, but little that would help explain whether the relative financial success of Ellen Holland and her friends was typical or exceptional.¹³ And there are no signs of a revival in the kinds of “mobility studies,” pioneered more than thirty years ago by Stephan Thernstrom, which might enable us to put the financial achievements of someone like Ellen Holland into context.¹⁴

Those familiar with Irish and Irish-American historiography would certainly suppose that Ellen Holland’s story must be unusual. A deep pessimism has pervaded this literature, assuming that the famine immigrants were a kind of lost generation fated to be victims of disease, nativism, low-paying jobs, and overcrowded tenements in North America or England. Any significant improvement in their circumstances, such studies imply, came in the lives of their assimilated children. There are exceptions, but most scholars continue to believe, as Oscar Handlin put it more than fifty years ago in *Boston’s Immigrants*, that the famine

¹¹ A concise introduction to the concept of transnationalism is Alejandro Portes, “Global Villagers: The Rise of Transnational Communities,” *The American Prospect* 25 (March–April 1996): 74–77. The literature in this field is voluminous, but for a representative sample see Luis Guarnizo and Michael P. Smith, eds., *Transnationalism from Below* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1997); Nancy Foner, “What’s New about Transnationalism? New York Immigrants Today and at the Turn of the Century,” *Diaspora* 6 (1997): 355–75; Eduardo Guarnizo, et al., “Mistrust, Fragmented Society, and Transnational Migration: Colombians in New York City and Los Angeles,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (United Kingdom) 22 (March 1999): 367–96.

¹² Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York, 1995); David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York, 1991); Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York, 1993).

¹³ Swift and Gilley, *Irish in Victorian Britain*, 13 (quotation); Patrick O’Sullivan, ed., *The Irish World Wide*, 6 vols. (London, 1992–96). Among the best of the recent books on the famine are Christine Kinealy, *This Great Calamity: The Irish Famine, 1845–1852* (Dublin, 1994); Cormac O’Grada, *Black ’47 and Beyond: The Great Irish Famine in History, Economy, and Memory* (Princeton, N.J., 1999); and Peter Gray, *Famine, Land, and Politics: British Government and Irish Society, 1843–1850* (Dublin, 1999).

¹⁴ Stephan Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth-Century City* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964); Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880–1970* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973); Peter R. Knights, *Plain People of Boston: A Study in City Growth, 1830–1860* (New York, 1971); Clyde and Sally Griffen, *Natives and Newcomers: The Ordering of Opportunity in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Poughkeepsie* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978); Thomas Kessner, *The Golden Door: Italian and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City, 1880–1915* (New York, 1977). Little mobility work has focused on the antebellum Irish, but in addition to the work by Knights and the Griffens, see Jo Ellen McNergney Vinyard, *The Irish on the Urban Frontier: Nineteenth-Century Detroit, 1850–80* (New York, 1976); and Dale Light, “Class, Ethnicity, and the Urban Ecology: Philadelphia’s Irish, 1830–1880” (PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1979).

Irish were both economically and socially “fated to remain a massive lump in the community, undigested, undigestible.”¹⁵

When I began investigating the history of Five Points, I assumed that the prevailing, gloomy picture of the famine-era immigrants would be borne out on its mean streets. Given that Five Points’ residents were the most impoverished in antebellum New York, I expected to find them barely scraping by from payday to payday. I was especially sure that the Lansdowne immigrants would fit this stereotype. They made up about one in nine of Five Points’ Irish-Catholic inhabitants in the 1850s and were concentrated overwhelmingly in the most squalid tenements in the neighborhood’s most decrepit and crime-ridden blocks. But the bank balances of Ellen Holland and her fellow Lansdowne immigrants force us to reconsider such long-held preconceptions.¹⁶

IT WAS AN ENGLISH NOBLEMAN, the third marquis of Lansdowne, who, by deciding to finance a massive Irish emigration program, made it possible for Ellen Holland and about a thousand of her friends, family members, and neighbors to move to Five Points. Born Henry Petty in about 1780, Lansdowne from an early age took an interest in British politics. He considered himself an “independent Whig” and as a young man entered the Cabinet, serving as chancellor of the Exchequer at twenty-six as a result of his expertise in political economy and financial and administrative theory. At a time when English aristocrats commonly supported artists by allowing them to live on their estates and paint at their leisure, Lansdowne did the same for economists, specifically those of a classically liberal bent. So many of them lived at or visited Bowood House, his Wiltshire mansion, that the leading economists of the era who espoused free trade and complete *laissez faire* became

¹⁵ Oscar Handlin, *Boston’s Immigrants: A Study in Acculturation*, rev. edn. (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), 55. Two notable exceptions to the pessimistic tenor of famine-era Irish-American historiography are Hasia R. Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore, 1984), who emphasizes women’s success (primarily as live-in domestic servants) at earning money to send to their families in Ireland; and Joseph P. Ferrie, *Yankees Now: Immigrants in the Antebellum United States, 1840–1860* (New York, 1999), who finds significant upward mobility for antebellum immigrants. For an optimistic portrayal of the Irish who settled in England, see Donald M. MacRaild, *Irish Migrants in Modern Britain, 1750–1922* (London, 1999).

¹⁶ Irish immigrants made up 66 percent of the adult Five Points population in 1855, according to the state census of that year. The marriage records of the neighborhood’s Roman Catholic church, the Church of the Transfiguration, whose secretary noted the county and parish of birth of nearly every person married there from 1853 to 1859, indicate that 14 percent of Irish-Catholic immigrant Five Pointers were natives of County Kerry. Those records show that 79 percent of the neighborhood’s Kerry residents were natives of the Lansdowne estate, leading to my assertion that one in nine Irish-Catholic Five Points adults in the mid-1850s was a Lansdowne immigrant. My figures probably approximate the county origins of all Five Points Irish immigrants fairly accurately, because although there were some Irish Protestants in the neighborhood, there were not many. This is confirmed by an analysis of the Emigrant Savings Bank Test Books, which also listed place of birth and whose depositors included Protestants and Jews as well. Of the Five Pointers in the Transfiguration register, 173 were from Sligo, 142 from Cork, 141 from Kerry, 59 from Galway, 56 from Limerick, 52 from Tipperary, 42 from Mayo, 36 from Leitrim, 40 from Roscommon, 30 from Waterford, 27 from Kilkenny, 19 from Dublin (city and county), 17 from Tyrone, 16 from Donegal, 15 from Fermanagh, 15 from Clare, 15 from Longford, 14 from Meath, 14 from Louth, 13 from Queen’s (now Laois), 12 from Westmeath, 12 from King’s (now Offaly), 12 from Cavan, 10 from Monaghan, 9 from Wexford, 9 from Armagh, 9 from Derry, 8 from Kildare, 7 from Carlow, 3 from Down, 3 from Wicklow, and none from Antrim. See Marriage Register, Church of the Transfiguration, 29 Mott Street, New York.

known as the “Bowood set.” Though a failure as chancellor of the Exchequer, Lansdowne remained an influential figure in English politics throughout his life, serving in various Whig cabinets and for many years as Lord President of Her Majesty’s Council.¹⁷

Lansdowne owned 95,000 statute acres in various parts of west Kerry, but the bulk of his holdings (and those from which all of his assisted emigrants originated) was in the southwest corner of the county in the barony of Glanarought. Consisting of about 67,000 statute acres (105 square miles), Lansdowne’s Glanarought estate spanned nearly three civil parishes—all of Tuosist, the Kerry portion of Kilcascan, and more than half of Kenmare. This vast property, one of the dozen largest estates in nineteenth-century Ireland, had been a mid-seventeenth-century gift to Sir William Petty for his role in subduing the Irish “rebels” who had resisted England’s conquest of the island. Petty’s descendants eventually received peerages, becoming the marquises of Lansdowne.¹⁸

Lansdowne’s Irish estate (this and all subsequent references to the “Lansdowne estate” refer to the Glanarought portion of his holdings) was “a very rocky and mountainous country.” A topographical guide to Ireland described Tuosist, the largest of the three parishes, as “one of the wildest and most irreclaimable districts in the county; it is separated on the south-east from the county of Cork by a range of lofty and almost impassable mountains.” Kilcascan was still more remote than Tuosist, for while the latter parish included a long stretch of the south shore of the Kenmare River (really a bay at this point), Kilcascan sat entirely within the mountains, and as late as 1837 neither of the two main roads in “this wild and mountainous district” was passable by carriage. Residents usually referred to this isolated area as “Bonane” (the name of the Catholic parish it encompassed) rather than by the civil classification of Kilcascan. “Rocky mountain and bog” characterized Kenmare parish as well, although it did contain the estate’s one sizable village—the town of Kenmare—with a population of 1,300 in 1841. The large majority of the estate that lay south of the wide river was thoroughly isolated from Kenmare until 1842, just before the famine, when a suspension bridge was completed to link “the wilds of Tuosist” and Bonane to Kenmare town and the roads to Cork and Killarney.¹⁹

Only a tiny fraction of this vast district was arable. “The portions of land reclaimed from the rocky mountains . . . are so small,” wrote the Lansdowne agent

¹⁷ Harriet Martineau, *Biographical Sketches* (New York, 1869), 329–37; Peter Mandler, *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform: Whigs and Liberals, 1830–1852* (London, 1990), 28–35, 101–04, 173–74. The first modern biographical study of Lansdowne, by Professor John Powell of Cumberland College, will be published in 2003 in *Parliamentary History*.

¹⁸ On the history and extent of Lansdowne’s holdings, see Gerard J. Lyne, *The Lansdowne Estate in Kerry under the Agency of William Stewart Trench, 1849–72* (Dublin, 2001), xvii–xxii, xxx–xxxviii, lviii–lxii; W[illiam] G. Carroll, *The Lansdowne Irish Estates and Sir William Petty*, 2d edn. (Dublin, 1881), 4, 9–11, 21; Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, 3 vols. (1837; rpt. edn., Port Washington, N.Y., 1970), 1: 230–31, 2: 37–38, 661; *The Times* (London), January 7, 1881 (for its status as one of the largest estates in Ireland); *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Take the Census of Ireland for the Year 1841* (Dublin, 1843), 198.

¹⁹ House of Commons, *Evidence Taken . . . in Respect to the Occupation of Land in Ireland*, 1845 [616], 20: 910; Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, 1: 230–31, 2: 37–38, 661; [Sixth] Marquis of Lansdowne, *Glanerought and the Petty-Fitzmaurices* (London, 1937), 125–26 (suspension bridge); Lyne, “Post-Famine Emigration from Kenmare,” 133 (“wilds of Tuosist”).

in 1869, “that they are barely sufficient to grow potatoes and turnips enough for the consumption of the people.” Most of the Lansdowne property was instead used as pasture for cows and sheep. As a result, the estate’s population on the eve of the famine was relatively modest—only about 12,800 people—of which 7,500 lived in Tuosist, 3,900 in Kenmare parish, and 1,400 in Bonane. Yet despite being spread out over a wide area, Lansdowne’s tenants were a close-knit bunch. Tuosist priest Callaghan McCarthy told a visitor that “there existed considerable remains of clanship among these mountaineers. He described them as highly moral, a careless, but a peaceable and contented race, with great kindness and simple hospitality, and strong family attachments.”²⁰

These “mountaineers” were among the most destitute inhabitants of Ireland. Laborers were lucky to find more than a day or two of paid work in a week, and with such an oversupply of unskilled workers, wages fell to incredibly low levels. With so little arable land available, rents for potato land skyrocketed, meaning that most small-scale, impoverished farmers and laborers could neither grow nor buy enough food for their families. James Hickson, the Lansdowne agent until mid-century, testified that the typical poor man’s diet consisted entirely of either “potatoes and milk, or potatoes and fish; some are so poor as to use [only] potatoes and salt.” Another source confirmed that “no groceries are used in a labourer’s family except a very little at Christmas.” Many impoverished families had chickens that laid eggs, but they never ate them, selling them instead to pay for tobacco. Summer months were particularly difficult, as the previous year’s potato supply ran out or spoiled weeks or months before the new crop was ready for harvest. “Hungry July” was a common phenomenon throughout western Ireland, but especially so on the Lansdowne estate.²¹

Lansdowne tenants were so desperately poor that they would often nail shut their cabins during the summer and walk a hundred miles or more through the counties of Cork, Limerick, or Tipperary in search of work. “In autumn they go to the low country during the harvest,” noted a Kerry resident, “and their wives then often shut up their houses and go begging with their families until their husbands come home with their earnings” in time to harvest their own potatoes. After digging up the tubers, some again went inland to find work before returning home for Christmas. Not all Lansdowne laborers needed to roam the countryside in search of work, but those who lived on remote mountainsides in Tuosist and Bonane could

²⁰ *Report of the . . . Census of Ireland for the Year 1841*, 198; Bennett, *Narrative of a Recent Journey of Six Weeks in Ireland*, 129–30; William S. Trench, *Realities of Irish Life* (London, 1868), 112–13.

²¹ House of Commons, “Poor Inquiry (Ireland), Appendix E, Containing Baronial Examinations Relative to Food, Cottages and Cabins, Clothing and Furniture, Pawnbroking and Savings Banks, Drinking,” *Sessional Papers, Reports from Commissioners*, 1836, 32: 58, 106 (alcohol), supplement p. 213 (Hickson); “Poor Inquiry (Ireland), Appendix D, Containing Baronial Examinations Relative to Earnings of Labourers, Cottier Tenants, Employment of Women and Children, Expenditure,” *Sessional Papers, Reports from Commissioners*, 1836, 31: 81, 89, 108; “Poor Inquiry (Ireland), Appendix F, Containing Baronial Examinations Relative to Con Acre, Quarter or Score Ground, Small Tenantry, Consolidation of Farms and Dislodged Tenantry, Emigration,” *Sessional Papers, Reports from Commissioners*, 1836, 33: 22; *Evidence Taken . . . in Respect to the Occupation of Land in Ireland*, 1845 [616], 20: 910–12, 918–19; Jonathan Binns, *The Miseries and Beauties of Ireland* (London, 1837), 2: 333–34; Kevin Danaher, *The Year in Ireland* (Cork, 1972), 163–66.

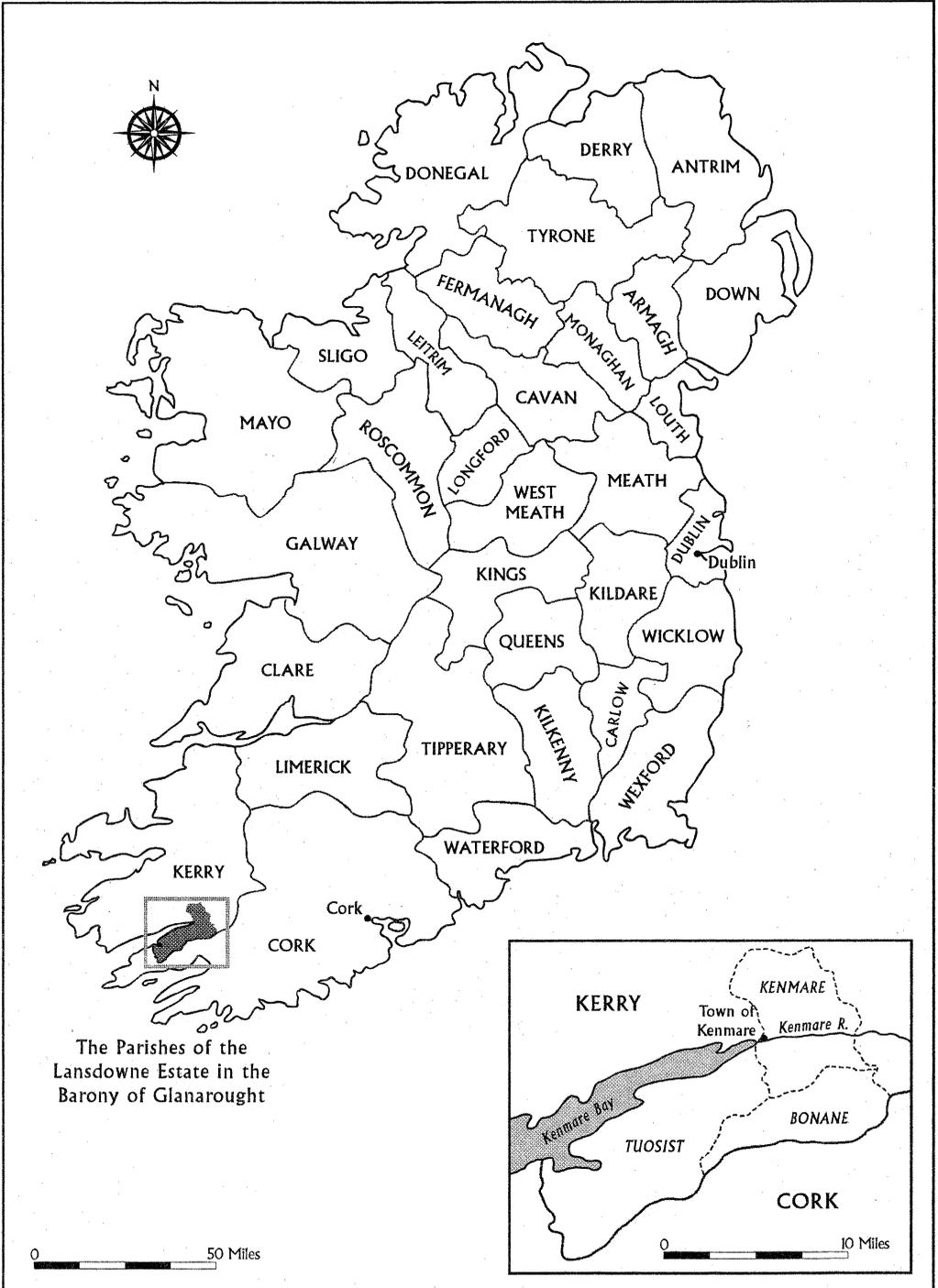


FIGURE 1: Map of Ireland, with the parishes of the Lansdowne estate highlighted. Inset shows location of Kenmare, Tuosist, and Bonane parishes within the estate. Mapmaker Chris Robinson.

rarely rent enough potato land to feed their families, and thus had no choice but to partake of this migratory ritual.²²

During the portions of the year when they inhabited them, and especially until the mid-1830s, Lansdowne's tenants lived in some of the worst dwellings in all of Ireland. Their cottages usually measured "13 feet long by 10 broad" and were

built of stone and mud. It contains generally but one apartment. The roof is merely thatch . . . of straw, heath, or potato stalks . . . The floor is made of beaten earth; it is commonly damp, being below the level of the surrounding ground, and below the water contained in the manure holes outside the door . . . There are no chimneys in general . . . Cabins never contain [cooking] grates; there is no glass in the windows . . . Many of the worst cabins have no wooden door but a kind of hurdle with heather or long grass woven among the sticks.

One visitor who traveled throughout Ireland in 1834 called these "as miserable cabins as I ever beheld." They were "beyond description, wretched abodes." Apparently embarrassed, Lansdowne began financing the construction of stone homes to replace the mud hovels. By the eve of the famine, stone cabins predominated, but the revolutionary Michael Doheny, who hid in Tuosist cabins after the failed uprising of 1848, insisted that in many cases their "showy exterior is sadly belied by the filth and discomfort of the inside." Such cabins were almost devoid of furniture, and the occupants (especially women and children) often had no clothing other than the tatters on their backs.²³

Who was to blame for this situation? Doheny faulted Lansdowne. William Steuart Trench, the marquis's agent beginning at mid-century, blamed his predecessor as well as the tenants themselves. Father O'Sullivan, who was no admirer of Lansdowne, nonetheless admitted that the marquis charged very reasonable rents and did not evict tenants even when they fell years behind in their payments. No matter whom one faulted, all observers agreed with Irish Poor Inquiry official Jonathan Binns that Lansdowne's "poor cottagers are in a very distressed condition . . . They are nearly half naked, and are but half fed. This is indeed a wretched state of things." O'Sullivan was even more blunt. Laborers on the Lansdowne estate, he asserted in 1844, were "the most wretched people upon the face of the globe."²⁴

GIVEN THEIR PRECARIOUS POSITION, it should come as no surprise that Lansdowne's tenants were devastated by the famine that commenced after a fungus began to destroy potato crops in the summer of 1845. "Kenmare was completely paralysed," asserted Trench, who recalled that "famine stalked unmolested through the glens and mountains." During the first year after the blight struck, from mid-1845 to

²² Trench, *Realities of Irish Life*, 112–13 (quotation); Archdeacon John O'Sullivan in *Tralee Chronicle*, February 9, 1850, in Lyne, "Post-Famine Emigration from Kenmare," 66; House of Commons, "Poor Inquiry (Ireland), Appendix D," 52; Henry D. Inglis, *Ireland in 1834: A Journey throughout Ireland during the Spring, Summer, and Autumn of 1834*, 2d edn. (London, 1835), 1: 209–13.

²³ House of Commons, "Poor Inquiry (Ireland), Appendix E," 58, 90, supplement p. 213; Binns, *Miseries and Beauties of Ireland*, 2: 333–34; Inglis, *Ireland in 1834*, 209–13; Michael Doheny, *The Felon's Tracks* (1849; rpt. edn., Dublin, 1951), 244.

²⁴ Trench, *Realities of Irish Life*, 112–13; *Evidence Taken . . . in Respect to the Occupation of Land in Ireland*, 1845 [616], 20: 912, 919; Binns, *Miseries and Beauties of Ireland*, 2: 336–37; Doheny, *Felon's Tracks*, 244.

mid-1846, the distress was relatively mild. Many, in fact, refused to eat the “Indian corn meal” imported from North America by Lansdowne and the Kenmare Relief Committee. With the complete failure of the potato crop in 1846, however, attitudes changed rapidly. The hungry now demanded cornmeal, noted the committee in August, while also reporting that “dysentery and the common cholera are already beginning to make their appearance to a frightful extent.” Committee members warned that starvation would be inevitable unless the government spent more on relief efforts.²⁵

Instead, expenditures on aid were cut back, and even those who did receive assistance did not get enough. By February 1847, deaths from starvation were common. “This neighbourhood is becoming depopulated with railway speed,” wrote one relief official from Kenmare, describing the public works projects set up to employ the starving laborers and cottiers (those who subsisted by renting tiny parcels of farm land):

I see nothing within the bounds of possibility that can save the people. On one road, on which I have 300 men employed, the deaths are three each day. This is in the parish of Tuosist. The people are buried without coffins, frequently in the next field. No noise or sign of grief for the dead; every thought is selfish and unfeeling . . . I daily witness the most terrible spectacles. Men and women are discolored with dropsy, attacked with dysentery, or mad with fever, on the works—driven there by the terrible necessity of trying to get as much as would purchase a meal . . . With most of these working is a mockery; they can scarcely walk to and from the roads, and how can they work! . . . When a respectable person passes the houses of these poor people, the saddest sights present themselves; women, children, and old men crawling out on all fours, perhaps from beside a corpse, to crave a morsel of any kind of food.

Men predominated among the dead because they were forced to toil on such road crews, even though the small allotments of food they received as payment could not sustain them.²⁶

Conditions in the town of Kenmare were hardly better than those in the countryside. O’Sullivan recorded in his diary in early 1847 that there was “nothing more usual than to find four or five bodies in the street every morning.” The suffering of the living was almost as difficult to bear as the sight of the dead. “The swollen limbs, emaciated countenances, and other hideous forms of disease . . . were innumerable,” gasped visitor William Bennett. “In no other part of Ireland had I seen people falling on their knees to beg. It was difficult to sit over breakfast after this.” O’Sullivan wrote directly to Charles Trevelyan, permanent secretary at the Treasury in London and the man who singlehandedly controlled most relief expenditures, hoping that if Trevelyan understood the extent of the suffering he might make more aid available. “The cries of starving hundreds that besiege me

²⁵ Lansdowne, *Glanerought and the Petty-Fitzmaurices*, 127; Trench, *Realities of Irish Life*, 113–14; Kenmare Relief Committee to the Lord Commissioners of Her Majesty’s Treasury, August 22, 1846, in “Correspondence Relating to the Measures Adopted for the Relief of Distress in Ireland (Board of Works Series) First Part,” 1847 [764], 50: 62–63, in *Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers*, “Famine” series (Shannon, 1970), 6: 94–95 (hereafter, *IUP-BPP*, *Famine*).

²⁶ Mr. Gill to Mr. Russell, February 25, 1847, in House of Commons, “Correspondence Relating to the Measures Adopted for the Relief of Distress in Ireland (Commissariat Series) Second Part,” 1847 [796], 52: 192, in *IUP-BPP*, *Famine*, 7: 550.

from morning until night actually ring in my ears during the night,” O’Sullivan reported. “I attended myself a poor woman, whose infant, dead two days, lay at the foot of the bed, and four others nearly dead in the same bed; and, horrible to relate, a famished cat got up on the corpse of the poor infant and was about to gnaw it, but for my interference. I could tell you such tales of woe without end.”²⁷

Conditions in Tuosist were especially bad. “It is a wild alpine region; the inhabitants being mostly self-dependent, and in ordinary times holding very little communication with the rest of the world,” Bennett explained. A clergyman there told him that one-third of the inhabitants “had no other means of subsistence, at the present moment, than sea-weed and shell-fish from the rocks.” Part of the problem, according to Captain Erasmus Ommanney, head of the Kenmare relief district, was that his subordinates in Tuosist were sometimes “exercising undue severity on the applicants for relief.” Hundreds who could not gain admission to the already full poorhouse in Kenmare were starving to death in Tuosist, but the local poor law guardians followed the letter of the law and refused to grant relief to those living outside the workhouse.

Even when such rules were eventually waived, relief officials’ hardheartedness often led to tragic results. In December 1847, Honora Connolly and her five daughters left the Kenmare poorhouse after receiving assurances that they would be eligible for food back home in Tuosist. When she arrived there, however, agents refused to provide her with food, insisting she was not on their list. “Norry” walked back to Kenmare to investigate the problem, leaving four of her five daughters behind, but by the time she returned to Tuosist the following day, all four lay dead. An investigation eventually revealed that the relief officials had mistakenly recorded Connolly’s name on their list as Norry Harrington. Her four children were a few of the “thousands in Tuosist sunk beneath the sudden loss of the potatoe.” Conditions there, concluded Bennett, were “utterly past the powers of description, or even of imagination, without witnessing.”²⁸

With the death toll mounting, one wonders why Lansdowne did not consider financing the emigration of his tenants as a means to relieve both their suffering and *his* obligation to feed them (the government had shifted most of the burden for relief efforts to wealthy Irish landlords such as Lansdowne). By the end of 1847, his political confidante, Lord Palmerston, had already sent 2,000 of his starving County Sligo tenants to Canada. A few other prominent landlords had followed suit. Very few Lansdowne tenants could afford to emigrate on their own, and few had relatives in the United States who could finance their emigration. At the end of 1847, most

²⁷ O’Sullivan to Trevelyan, “February, 1847,” in House of Commons, “Correspondence Relating to the Measures adopted for the Relief of Distress in Ireland (Commissariat Series) Second Part,” 1847 [796], 52: 192, 166, in *IUP-BPP, Famine*, 7: 550, 524; Bennett, *Narrative of a Recent Journey of Six Weeks in Ireland*, 127–29; O’Sullivan Diary, c. March 1847, in Lyne, “Post-Famine Emigration from Kenmare,” 125.

²⁸ Bennett, *Narrative of a Recent Journey of Six Weeks in Ireland*, 129–30, 132; Captain Erasmus Ommanney to the Commissioners, March 12, 1848, in House of Commons, “Papers Relating to Proceedings for the Relief of the Distress and State of the Unions and Workhouses in Ireland; Sixth Series,” *Sessional Papers*, 1848 [955], 56: 336, in *IUP-BPP, Famine*, 3: 336; Ommanney to the Commissioners, November 28, December 12 (quotation), 1847, January 8, 1848, in House of Commons, “Papers Relating to Proceedings for the Relief of . . . Ireland; Fifth Series,” 1847–48 [919], 60: 511, 514, 519–26, in *IUP-BPP, Famine*, 2: 835, 838, 843–50, 852; Trench (“sunk beneath”) quoted in Lyne, “Post-Famine Emigration from Kenmare,” 124–25.

of Lansdowne's tenants were still in Kerry receiving relief rations paid for primarily by the marquis himself.²⁹

Perhaps Lansdowne believed that his Kerry tenants could survive the blight without his having to expend the huge sums on emigration laid out by Palmerston. If so, reports from Kenmare in the spring of 1848 must have pleased the marquis immensely. All signs indicated that suffering and privation were on the wane, and the potatoes his tenants planted in 1848 initially showed no signs of blight.³⁰ But either because of illness or lack of seed potatoes, Lansdowne's leaseholders had not planted nearly enough potatoes to feed themselves for a whole year, and by February 1849 gruesome reports of starvation again began emanating from Kenmare. "I was shocked in Skibbereen, Dunmanway, [and] Bantry," wrote a visitor to Kenmare who had just come from those infamously destitute west Cork towns, "but they were as nothing to what was now before me . . . Bad as the Bantry paupers were they were 'pampered rogues' in comparison to these poor creatures . . . Spectres from the grave could not present a more ghastly, unearthly appearance . . . The very thought of them to this moment sickens me." The emaciated once again crowded into Kenmare, "dying by the dozens in the streets." According to O'Sullivan, "theft and robbery and plunder became . . . universal" as others used any available means to stave off starvation. However obtained, food alone did not necessarily ensure survival. The cholera epidemic sweeping Europe and North America in the spring of 1849 also struck Kenmare, and due to the overcrowding in the workhouse, its inmates were particularly susceptible. Dysentery afflicted many as well, observed O'Sullivan, its victims so thirsty that they would barter their weekly one pound relief ration of cornmeal "for a half noggin of new milk to try and quench the burning thirst which invariably follows them." Despite government declarations that the famine was over, the death toll in southwest Kerry climbed steadily higher in 1849. By the end of that year, after the blight again destroyed the 1849 crop, at least 1,000 (and perhaps as many as 1,700) of Lansdowne's 12,000 tenants had succumbed to the famine and the diseases spread in its wake. Many others were barely hanging on.³¹

In 1850, Lansdowne hired a new estate agent, William Trench, in hopes that he might better administer relief to the suffering tenants. Trench decided that only

²⁹ Lansdowne, *Glanerought and the Petty-Fitzmaurices*, 127; Ommanney to the Commissioners, March 5, 1848, in House of Commons, "Papers Relating to Proceedings for the Relief of . . . Ireland; Sixth Series," 1848 [955], 335, in *IUP-BPP, Famine*, 3: 335. For the Palmerston emigration program, see Tyler Anbinder, "Lord Palmerston and the Irish Famine Emigration," *The Historical Journal* (Cambridge) 44 (2001): 441-69.

³⁰ Ommanney to the Commissioners, March 26, April 1, 1848, in House of Commons, "Papers Relating to Proceedings for the Relief of . . . Ireland; Sixth Series" [955], 339-40, in *IUP-BPP, Famine*, 3: 339-40.

³¹ Unknown writer to "My dear William," February 27, 1849; copies of O'Sullivan to [Poulett Scrope?], April 16, 1849 (on cholera, not quoted); and O'Sullivan to Poulett Scrope, April 30, 1849; *The Nation*, December 12, 1857, all in Lyne, "Post-Famine Emigration from Kenmare," 97, 72, 100-01. The mortality figure is based on Lansdowne, *Glanerought and the Petty-Fitzmaurices*, 128-29, which cites Trench as saying that 5,000 had died in the Kenmare "union" (relief district) by the time he became agent in early 1850. The Lansdowne estate made up about one-third of the Kenmare union, thus my upper estimate that about one-third of that figure had died. O'Sullivan, in his critique of Trench's memoir, insisted that the actual figure was far lower. Given the numbers dying in the workhouse and on works projects described in the contemporary reports, it is hard to imagine that fewer than 1,000 died on the estate.

radical measures could both feed Lansdowne's tenants and make the estate profitable in the foreseeable future. In November, the agent sailed for England to describe his plan to Lansdowne in person at Bowood. As Trench recalled the discussion in his memoirs,

I showed him by the poor-house returns, that the number of paupers off his estate and receiving relief in the workhouse amounted to about three thousand. That I was wholly unable to undertake the employment of these people in their present condition, on reproductive works; and that if left in the workhouse, the smallest amount they could possibly cost would be £5 per head per annum, and thus that the poor rates must necessarily amount, for some years to come, to £15,000 per annum, unless these people died or left—and the latter was not probable . . . I explained to him further, that . . . inasmuch as the poor rates were a charge prior to the rent, it would be impossible for his lordship to expect any rent whatever out of his estate for many years to come. The remedy I proposed was as follows. That he should forthwith offer *free emigration* to every man, woman, and child now in the poor-house and *chargeable to his estate* . . . That even supposing they all accepted this offer, the total, together with a small sum per head for outfit and a few shillings on landing, would not exceed from £13,000 to £14,000, a sum less than it would cost to support them in the workhouse for a single year . . . I plainly proved that it would be cheaper to him, and *better for them*, to pay for their emigration at once, than to continue to support them at home.

Lansdowne must have been predisposed to accept Trench's reasoning, writing him a check on the spot for £8,000 (equivalent to about \$850,000 today) to be used to initiate the project. By the end of 1851, Lansdowne had spent £9,500 (slightly more than \$1 million today) on emigration.³²

Trench later recalled that when he returned to the estate and announced the emigration offer, "it was considered by the paupers to be too good news to be true. But when it began to be believed and appreciated, . . . they rushed from the country like a panic-stricken throng, each only fearing that the funds at my disposal might fail before he and his family could get their passage." Each week, Trench wrote, he chose from the poorhouse population 200 "of those apparently most suited for emigration; and having arranged their slender outfit," put them in the hands of an employee who led them on the sixty-mile journey to Cork, with orders "not to leave them nor allow them to scatter, until he saw them safely on board the emigrant ship . . . Week after week, to the astonishment of the good people of Cork, and sometimes not a little to their dismay, a batch of two hundred paupers appeared on the quays of Cork, bound for the Far West . . . And thus, two hundred after two hundred, week after week, departed for Cork, until the poor-house was nearly emptied of paupers chargeable to the Lansdowne estate; and in little more than a year 3,500 paupers had left Kenmare for America, all free emigrants, without . . .

³² Trench, *Realities of Irish Life*, 122–24. Lansdowne had previously expressed fears that poor relief taxes would ruin those in his position. When Parliament enacted legislation in 1849 forcing Irish landlords to pay an even larger proportion of famine relief, Lansdowne had condemned it as "nothing less than a scheme of confiscation, by which the weak would not be saved, but the strong be involved in general ruin." Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger: Ireland, 1845–1849* (1962; rpt. edn., New York, 1991), 379.

the slightest pressure put upon them to go.” Only fifty or so of the Lansdowne tenants in the workhouse chose to forgo the emigration offer.³³

TRENCH BOASTED IN HIS MEMOIRS that he allowed each emigrant “to select what port in America he pleased—whether Boston, New York, New Orleans, or Quebec.” Nearly all chose New York. Estate records indicate that 1,700 Lansdowne tenants left Kenmare for New York from December 1850 through March 1851. From that point, perhaps in an effort to save money, Trench no longer offered the emigrants their choice of destination, instead requiring them all to sail to Quebec. By the end of 1851, another 1,300 had departed for that port, although most of these emigrants eventually made their way to Manhattan as well.³⁴

Even in a huge metropolis such as New York, where more than 250,000 immigrants landed in 1851, the unprecedented poverty and raggedness of Lansdowne’s former tenants evoked an immediate public reaction. On March 19, the *New York Tribune* reported that “several destitute emigrants who arrived in this city a few days ago by the ship *Montezuma* [Ellen Holland’s vessel], from Liverpool, were found Monday afternoon in the streets, in a starving condition. They were taken to the Fourth Ward [Police] Station, where they were provided with food, after which they were sent to the Commissioners of Emigration,” who were responsible for assisting indigent immigrants. “These emigrants, it appears, were taken out of the poorhouses in Ireland, by Lord Lansdowne.” A few days after the *Tribune* story appeared, the *Sir Robert Peel* arrived in New York Harbor from London. The Lansdowne emigrants disembarking from that ship presented such a spectacle of wretchedness that it prompted an entire editorial in the *Herald*:

IRISH EMIGRANTS.—It is really lamentable to see the vast number of unfortunate creatures that are almost daily cast on our shores, penniless and without physical energy to earn a day’s living. Yesterday, groups of these hapless beings were to be seen congregated about the [City Hall] Park and in Broadway, looking the very picture of despair, misery, disease and want. On enquiry, we ascertained that they had arrived here by the ship *Sir Robert Peel*, and that they had been, for the most part, tenants of the Marquis of Lansdowne, on his county Kerry estate—ejected without mercy by him, and “shipped” for America in this wholesale way. Among them were gray haired and aged men and women, who had spent the heyday of their life as tillers of their native soil, and are now sent to this country to find a grave. This is too bad—it is inhuman; and yet it is an act of indiscriminate and wholesale expatriation committed by the “liberal” President of the Council of her Majesty Queen Victoria’s “liberal” ministry.

In the space of only a few days, the two most influential newspapers in the United States had taken the highly unusual step of singling out the Lansdowne immigrants

³³ Trench, *Realities of Irish Life*, 124–25.

³⁴ Lansdowne estate records in Lyne, “Post-Famine Emigration from Kenmare,” 136–37. For some of the Lansdowne ships, see Glazier, *Famine Immigrants*, 6: 619–20, 626–27, 662–63, 644–49, 7: 16–19, 84–85. Although most of the Lansdowne Papers were recently sold to the British Library, the papers relating to his Irish estate are still in the possession of his descendants, who now charge £100 per day to anyone wishing to examine them. Before these fees were put in place, Irish historian Gerard Lyne was given free access to these papers, and I decided to rely on his very thorough analysis of those records in this and subsequent paragraphs.

TABLE 1
Age Distribution of Irish Immigrants Arriving in New York in 1851

	<i>Age 16 or younger</i>	<i>Age 17 to 35</i>	<i>Age 36 or older</i>
Lansdowne Immigrants	43%	37%	20%
Random Irish Immigrants	22%	74%	4%

SOURCE: See n. 36.

for comment and condemnation, indicating that their condition upon arrival must have been extraordinarily bad. Even in a city teeming with impoverished newcomers, the plight of the Lansdowne emigrants aroused special indignation.³⁵

The charge that the Lansdowne immigrants were disproportionately “gray haired and aged” deserves attention. At first glance, the charge seems unfounded, as the average age of the Lansdowne immigrants—22.1 years—was slightly *lower* than that of the average Irish immigrant (22.3 years) arriving in New York at that time. But an analysis of the age distribution of the assisted emigrants bears out the Americans’ complaints. The average Irish immigrant was twice as likely to be in his or her prime work years—ages seventeen to thirty-five—as was a Lansdowne immigrant. Although the majority were far from “gray haired and aged,” the Lansdowne immigrants were four times more likely to have surpassed their fiftieth birthday than the typical Irish immigrant. Assisted emigrants also brought with them many more dependents (young children and aged parents) than did the average Irish immigrant. On the *American Eagle*, a ship probably made up entirely of Lansdowne tenants, 98 percent of the emigrants traveled with another family member. In contrast, only 55 percent of Irish immigrants traveled with one or more family members on the typical immigrant ship arriving in New York in this period. Because the marquis paid for entire families to emigrate, women were unusually numerous on the Lansdowne vessels, composing 49 percent of the adults versus only 31 percent on the average Irish immigrant ship. Thus, while the Lansdowne immigrants were hardly all superannuated, many fewer of them were the vigorous young men Americans perceived to be the ideal, self-supporting immigrant.³⁶

By April, the Irish press had reprinted the New York news stories concerning the Lansdowne emigrants, condemning the marquis and Trench for mistreating their helpless tenants. Trench defended himself, insisting in a letter that many of the emigrants supplied with clothes had asked to keep their old rags. “They wanted them as convenient garments to put on and beg with in New York,” Trench insisted, a charge he repeated in his memoirs more than fifteen years later.³⁷

³⁵ *New York Tribune*, March 19, 1851; *New York Herald*, March 22 (the *Sir Robert Peel*’s arrival), 23 (editorial), 1851.

³⁶ Lansdowne sample based on entire passenger list of the *American Eagle*. “Random Irish” based on a random sample of ships that arrived in New York from the same ports as the Lansdowne vessels (London and Liverpool) and in the same months of 1851. See Glazier, *Famine Immigrants*, 6: 435, 615–18, 652–56, 662–63, 7: 34–35.

³⁷ Trench to Henry A. Herbert, [April 1851], Bowood Papers, Bowood House, quoted in Lyne, “Post-Famine Emigration from Kenmare,” 111; Trench, *Realities of Irish Life*, 125–26.

Even if some immigrants did hide their new clothes in order to better plead for assistance, Trench himself deserves full blame for putting them in a position to have to ask for handouts at all. Estate records show that of the 1,700 emigrants sent to New York in 1851, Trench supplied clothing to at most 226. In addition, 1,350 of Lansdowne's New York-bound emigrants received no food whatsoever for the voyage. They were, in the words of one Irish journal, "obliged to subsist on the ship's allowance—an allowance which is scarcely sufficient to keep a full grown person from starvation. God help them!" This was no exaggeration, as the "ship's ration" consisted each day of just one pound of bread, meal, biscuits, or flour and only thirteen ounces of water. Each of Palmerston's assisted emigrants, in contrast, received each week, in addition to the ship's allowance, six pounds of biscuits, three-and-a-half pounds of flour, one pound of pork or beef, one pound of sugar, one pound of rice, eight ounces of treacle, four ounces of coffee, and two ounces of tea. To the charge that he had not properly supplied the emigrants, Trench admitted privately that "this is to a certain extent true but it would have cost thousands more to do it otherwise." Trench likewise justified his failure to give each emigrant the promised "few shillings" each to help with settlement in America on the grounds that most already owed the estate two to four years' back rent. Despite his public insistence that he had done nothing wrong, Trench began spending significantly more outfitting each emigrant after the press complained about his parsimony. Beginning in mid-April, when the *Tribune* and *Herald* reports reached Ireland, spending on supplies per emigrant increased more than twenty-fold, from about 9 pence (about \$4 today) per emigrant to about 17 shillings (\$90 today). Despite the increased outlay on supplies, Lansdowne quickly recouped his expenditures in reduced poor taxes. The Kenmare workhouse, which in 1850 had housed 2,500 Tuosist and Bonane paupers chargeable to Lansdowne, contained by 1853 only fourteen inhabitants from those parishes.³⁸

Trench argued that his employer was not the only one to benefit from the emigration program. "The most cheering accounts are daily reaching us of their success in New York," Trench informed Lansdowne in mid-April, by which point news from none but the very first emigrants could have reached Kenmare. "Considerable sums of money have been already sent over in very small remittances of 20s[hillings] or 30s each, and every letter which arrives brings new accounts of how well they fare and urging others to come over if they can." Two years later, Trench sounded the same refrain, bragging that "large sums are . . . coming over from America." Later, he reported that some emigrants had returned to Kerry sporting gold chains. "Others are receiving money to pay their rents," Trench insisted, "and we are certainly receiving back *good interest at least* for the money expended on emigration." Whether or not the Lansdowne emigrants wrote glowing accounts of their new homes cannot be verified, as none of their correspondence is

³⁸ "Return of Emigration off the Estate of the Marquis of Lansdowne from 1 Dec. 1850 to 1 Feb. 1852," in 1852 Trench annual report, Derreen Estate Papers; *Waterford Chronicle* in *Kerry Evening Post*, April 26, 1851; Trench to Herbert, April 18, 1851; Trench to Lansdowne, September 16, 1853, Bowood Papers, all in Lyne, "Post-Famine Emigration from Kenmare," 89, 104, 110, 112–13, 136–37. The food Palmerston supplied to his emigrants is described in S. Maxwell to Messrs. Stewart and Kincaid, November 27, 1847, in *Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers*, "Colonies, Canada" series (Shannon, 1969), 17: 353–54.

known to have survived. Father O'Sullivan later complained that Trench should have been "ashamed" at the way he exaggerated the success of "the victims of your ill-advised extermination." On the other hand, it would have been wholly in keeping with the tenor of emigrants' typically boastful letters for them to write, as Trench claimed, that they were "now living as well as Father McCarthy himself."³⁹

THANKS TO A NUMBER OF FORTUITOUS CIRCUMSTANCES, we can reconstruct the New York lives of the Lansdowne immigrants with a degree of precision and detail unprecedented in the literature on Irish famine-era migration. Because the secretary of Five Points' Roman Catholic church recorded unusually detailed biographical information in the parish's marriage register, one can identify the concentration of Lansdowne immigrants in the neighborhood and pinpoint their residential patterns to a remarkable extent. The recent opening of records from the Emigrant Savings Bank allows the historian to recreate the Lansdowne immigrants' occupational and financial status with equal accuracy. And because these immigrants chose to settle in such a notorious district, descriptions of their tenements abound as well.

Why the Lansdowne emigrants chose to concentrate in Five Points is not known. No longstanding Kerry enclave attracted these immigrants to the neighborhood. Kerry natives may have chosen to live there because, as the most destitute of immigrants (even by Irish famine standards), they gravitated to the cheapest housing in the city, much of which was in Five Points. Whatever their impetus for settling there, by 1860 about one in seven Five Points Irish Catholics was a Kerry native. More than 75 percent of these Kerry immigrants had once lived on the Lansdowne estate. Given that about two-thirds of the neighborhood's 14,000 residents in 1855 were Irish natives or their children, one can estimate that roughly 1,000 Five Points inhabitants were former Lansdowne tenants or their offspring. This sizable population resulted not merely from the massive emigration program of 1851 but also from the subsequent immigration underwritten by friends and relatives in New York, as well as occasional passages financed by Lansdowne after 1851. Of the 1,000 or so Lansdowne immigrants living in Five Points in 1855, approximately 500 had arrived in New York as part of the main Lansdowne flotilla in early 1851, while most of the remainder had emigrated later.⁴⁰

Neither the first Lansdowne immigrants nor those who joined them later chose haphazardly where within Five Points to reside. Each of the dominant Irish sub-

³⁹ Trench to Lansdowne, April 15, 1851, September 16, 1853, Bowood Papers; O'Sullivan to Trench, February 12, 1869, in *Tralee Chronicle*, February 16, 1869; Trench annual report of 1851, p. 6, Derreen Estate Papers, all in Lyne, "Post-Famine Emigration from Kenmare," 92-94; Trench, *Realities of Irish Life*, 126-27.

⁴⁰ For the source of my figures on Kerry natives in Five Points, see n. 16 above. My estimate that 500 of the Five Points Lansdowne immigrants came with the bulk of the assisted emigrants in early 1851 is based on the Emigrant Savings Bank records. Of the 81 former Lansdowne tenants who opened bank accounts by mid-1855 when the census was taken, 52 (64 percent) had arrived in New York by May 1851 when the last of the 1,700 emigrants sent directly to New York arrived there. Yet many post-1851 immigrants did not open accounts until after mid-1855, so I have estimated that about half the Lansdowne Five Points population in 1855 had arrived with the main flotilla. Accounts 1-10,000, Emigrant Savings Bank Test Books.

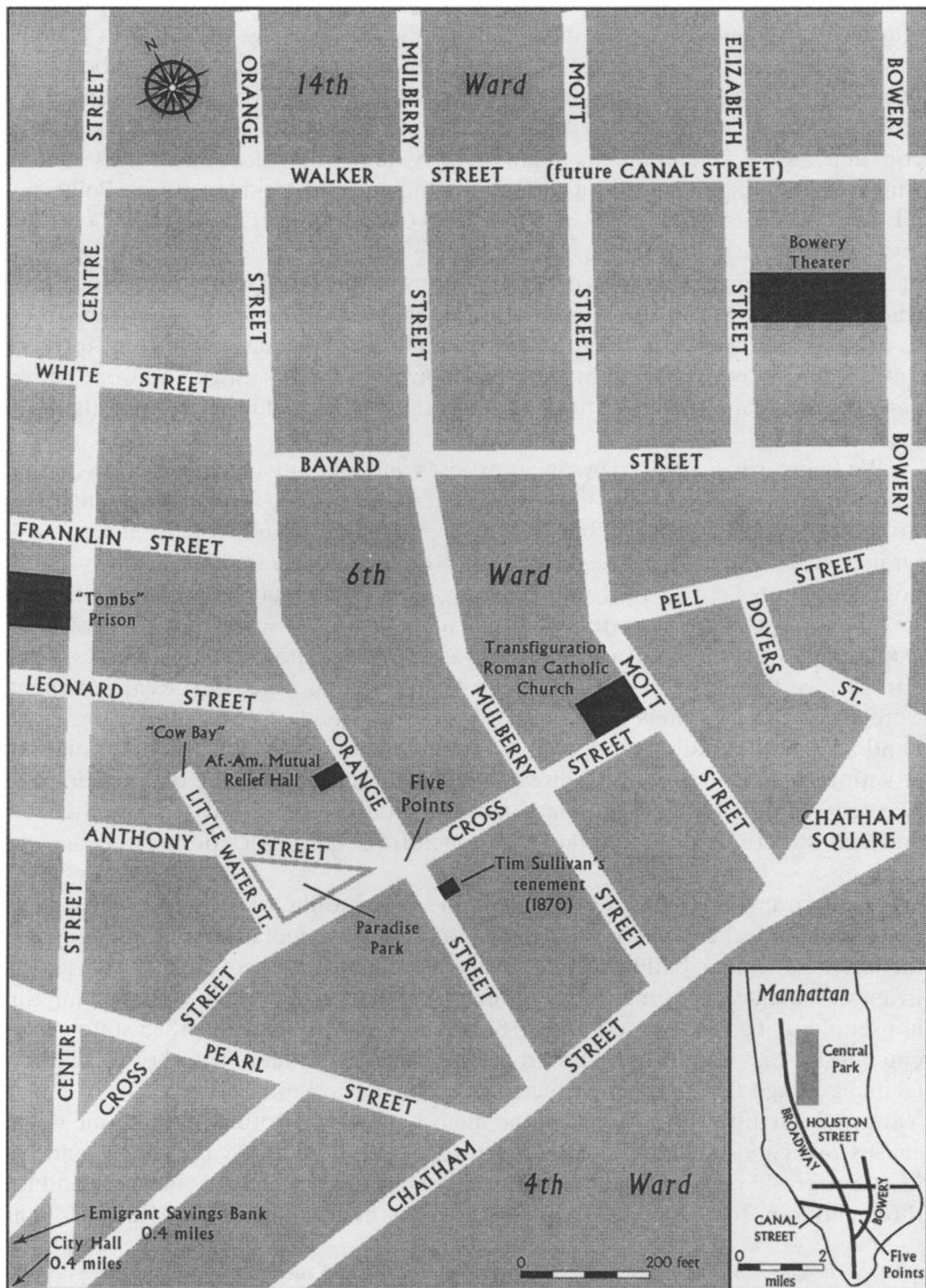


FIGURE 2: Map of the Five Points neighborhood in Manhattan, 1851. Mapmaker Chris Robinson.

groups in the neighborhood—those from counties Sligo, Cork, and Kerry—created enclaves to some degree. But the Kerry immigrants were by far the most clannish of the three, with 84 percent of them crowded into just two of the neighborhood's twenty or so blocks. These two blocks, *Orange Street from Anthony to Leonard* and *Anthony Street from Centre to Orange*, were two of the five blocks whose confluence gave Five Points its name.⁴¹ Kerry immigrants dominated those blocks, which were among the most notoriously squalid and crime-ridden in Five Points and all New York. Sixty-four percent of the Irish Catholic residents identified on those two blocks were Kerry natives. Seventy-nine percent of those Kerry natives had emigrated from the Lansdowne estate. Lansdowne immigrants often took over whole buildings within this zone. Eighty-six percent of the Irish Americans in the five-story building at 31 Orange Street, for example, had emigrated from Kerry. Of those Kerry natives, 88 percent were Lansdowne emigrants. Sligo and Cork natives never concentrated together to the degree that the Lansdowne immigrants did in their enclave.⁴²

We know from various newspaper exposés and legislative investigations that the tenements in which the Lansdowne immigrants clustered were Five Points' very worst. The northernmost address in the Lansdowne enclave, for instance, was 39 Orange Street. Less than two years before the Lansdowne immigrants arrived, 106 hogs had been kept at this address along with the human inhabitants. In 1856, investigators sent by the state legislature found no more swine, but they were still astounded by the filth and crowding. As was the case at most of the addresses in this part of Five Points, each lot held both a front and rear tenement. Rear tenements were the most notorious abodes in the neighborhood. These small, ramshackle buildings were usually trapped in perpetual shadow as the larger surrounding structures blocked virtually all direct sunlight. In most cases, the only windows on rear tenement buildings faced the noxious outhouses in the yard between the front and rear structures, meaning that the stench from the privies permeated the rear buildings.

At 39 Orange, the alley leading from the street to the rear tenement measured only nineteen inches wide in some places, and only two feet at its widest. Squeezing through to the rear building, the legislative committee discovered fifteen people living in a single room measuring fifteen by fourteen feet. This was probably the household of Tuosist native Barbara Sullivan. A year earlier, the 1855 state census enumerator had found the widowed fifty-year-old living there with her six children (ranging in age from four to sixteen) and six lodgers. Sullivan had arrived in New York in September 1851 just after the main Lansdowne flotilla. At the time of the census taker's visit, Sullivan lodged a forty-year-old widowed rag picker and her fifteen-year-old newsboy son, as well as a forty-year-old widowed "hawker" and her three children, the eldest of whom worked as a household servant. Ellen Holland

⁴¹ At the end of 1854, Orange Street was renamed Baxter, and Anthony Street became Worth. To avoid confusion, I have referred to them by their original names throughout this article, even though some of the quotations below are from the period after the names had changed.

⁴² Some 119 of the 185 residents identified on these blocks in the Transfiguration marriage records were natives of Kerry. Of those 119, 94 had been born on the Lansdowne estate. Note that at 31 Orange Street, Irish families occupied only 63 percent of the apartments according to the 1855 state census. The remaining residents were mostly Italians.

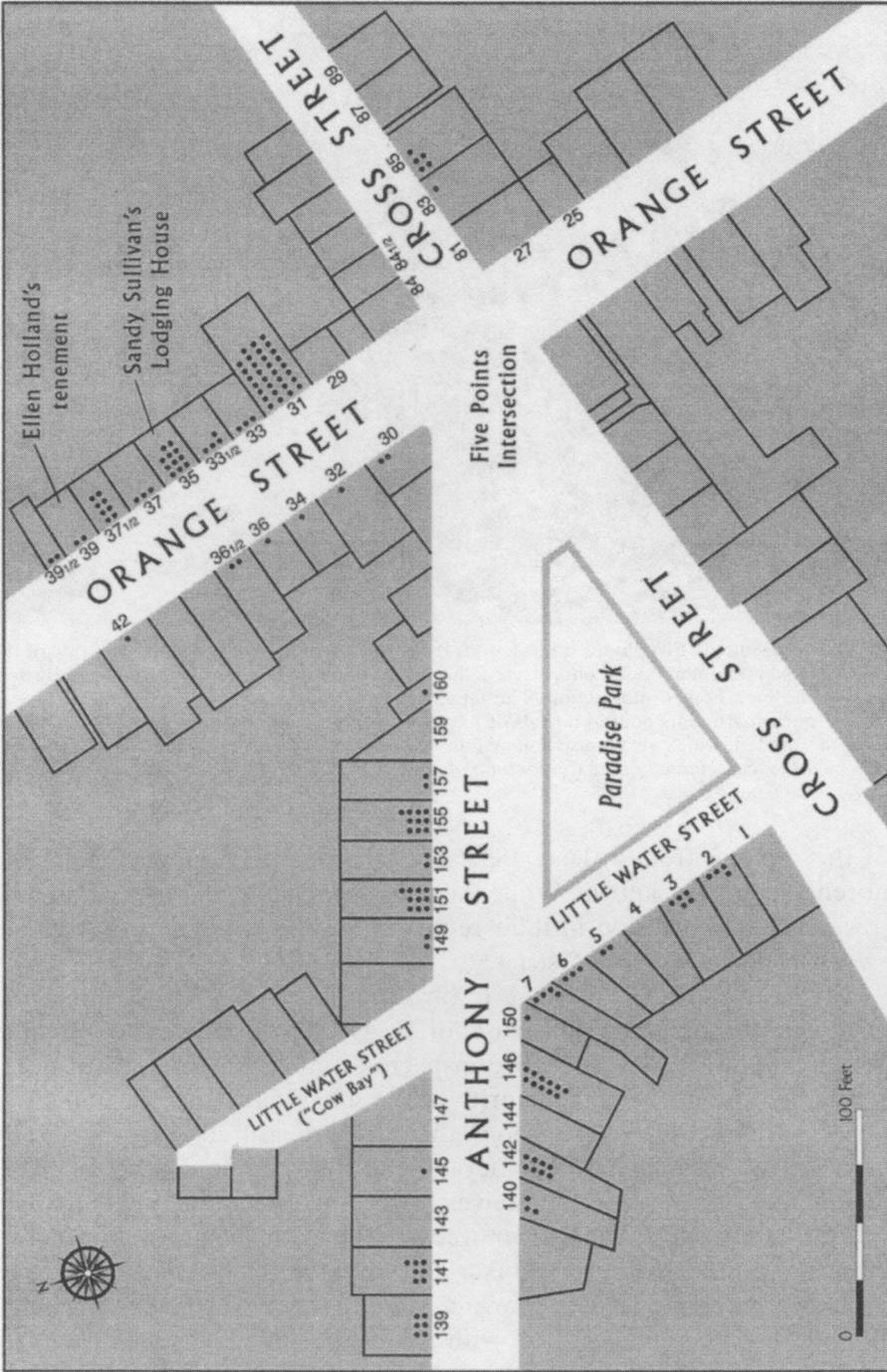


FIGURE 3: Map of Lansdowne enclave within Five Points, showing concentration of Lansdowne immigrants by building. Mapmaker Chris Robinson. Each dot represents one Lansdowne immigrant who was either married at the Church of the Transfiguration from 1853 to 1860 or who opened a bank account at the Emigrant Savings Bank from June 1851 to August 1856. Transfiguration Church Marriage Register, 29 Mott Street, New York; Emigrant Savings Bank Collection, Test Books and Account Ledgers, New York Public Library.



FIGURE 4: Lithograph showing the Five Points intersection, 1860. The left side of this print depicts one of the blocks on which the Lansdowne immigrants concentrated, the stretch of Orange Street (later renamed Baxter) that ran north from the Five Points intersection. The large five-story building at the center is 31 Orange Street, whose three-room apartments housed dozens of Lansdowne immigrants during the 1850s. The small run-down buildings to the left, which also housed many Lansdowne immigrants, were the most notorious on the block. D. T. Valentine, ed., *Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York for 1860* (New York, 1860).

also lived at this address from at least 1853 through 1855, though whether in the front or rear tenement is not known. While the legislators made no other comments about this residence, its inclusion in their report indicates that it must have been one of the worst in this miserable district.⁴³

As one moved south from 39 Orange toward the Five Points intersection, the frightful living conditions continued. Next door, 37 ½ Orange was also dominated by Lansdowne immigrants. The legislative inspectors found that as in most other parts of the neighborhood, the vast majority of the inhabitants spent the night in “sleeping closets,” tiny windowless bedrooms that rarely measured more than six by eight feet. Among the residents at this address, one widowed “old dame of sixty” and her two daughters “supported themselves by picking curled hair sixteen hours a day, the three earning five dollars per week.” The “old dame” was probably Honora Moriarty, who the 1855 census taker had found at this address along with twenty-year-old Margaret and sixteen-year-old Mary Moriarty. These three women and a fourth lodger shared an apartment with Denis Shea, his two young children, and his wife Mary and her brother Michael. Mary and Michael were themselves

⁴³ *New York Evening Post*, May 17, 1849; “Report of the Select Committee Appointed to Examine into the Condition of Tenant Houses in New-York and Brooklyn,” *Documents of the Assembly of the State of New-York, 80th Session—1857* (Albany, N.Y., 1857), doc. 205, p. 18.

Moriartys, though not directly related to the boarders. Such arrangements indicated the continuing strength of “clanship” noted by Tuosist’s Father McCarthy.⁴⁴ Lansdowne immigrants took in far more boarders than the typical Five Points family. The majority of Five Points households did not take in any lodgers at all, and those that did typically took in only one or two. The Lansdowne immigrants’ propensity to take in large numbers of boarders in 1855, four years after most had arrived in the United States, indicates that they were still anxious to supplement their work-related income.⁴⁵

While most Lansdowne immigrants rented space in their own homes to a few lodgers, some became full-time boardinghouse keepers, outfitting a basement or series of apartments with bunks to accommodate as many lodgers as possible. Such was the case at 35 Orange Street, another Lansdowne-dominated building, whose basement boarding establishment was referred to sarcastically by the *New York Illustrated News* as “Mrs. Sandy Sullivan’s Genteel Lodging-House,” operated by Lansdowne immigrants Sandy and Kate Sullivan from Tuosist. The Sullivans had arrived in New York with the main Lansdowne flotilla in March 1851. A *Times* reporter, stopping at their boardinghouse during a tour of Five Points in 1859, called it “one of the filthiest, blackest holes we had yet seen.” The proprietor of this “damp and filthy cellar . . . with much loquacity, assured [us] that the bed-clothes were all ‘clane and dacent sure,’ that they were washed ‘onst a week,’ every Thursday, and that the place was quite sweet.” Around the main room, the reporters saw

a number of wretched bunks, similar to those on shipboard, only not half as convenient, ranged around an apartment about ten feet square. Nearly every one of the half-dozen beds was occupied by one or more persons. No regard was paid to age or sex; but man, woman, and child were huddled up in one undistinguishable mass . . . The most fetid odors were emitted, and the floor and the walls were damp with pestiferous exhalations. But this was not all. There were two inner apartments, each of which was crowded to the same capacity as the outer one. Not the slightest breath of air reached these infernal holes, which were absolutely stifling with heat.

Inquiring about two small children sleeping soundly in one of the “hideous beds,” the manager told the reporters that their older sister, who cared for them, “was out begging, even at this hour.” Hard as it may be to believe, this lodging house must have been superior to many others in the neighborhood—to stay there cost six cents a night, far more than the worst dives. Sandy Sullivan told the *Times* that he “lodged none under any circumstances but honest hardworking people—which statement the police received with smiles and without contradiction.” “To do them justice,”

⁴⁴ I cannot document that these two families were former Lansdowne tenants, but their surnames and residence in a building particularly dominated by such tenants makes it likely that my identification is accurate.

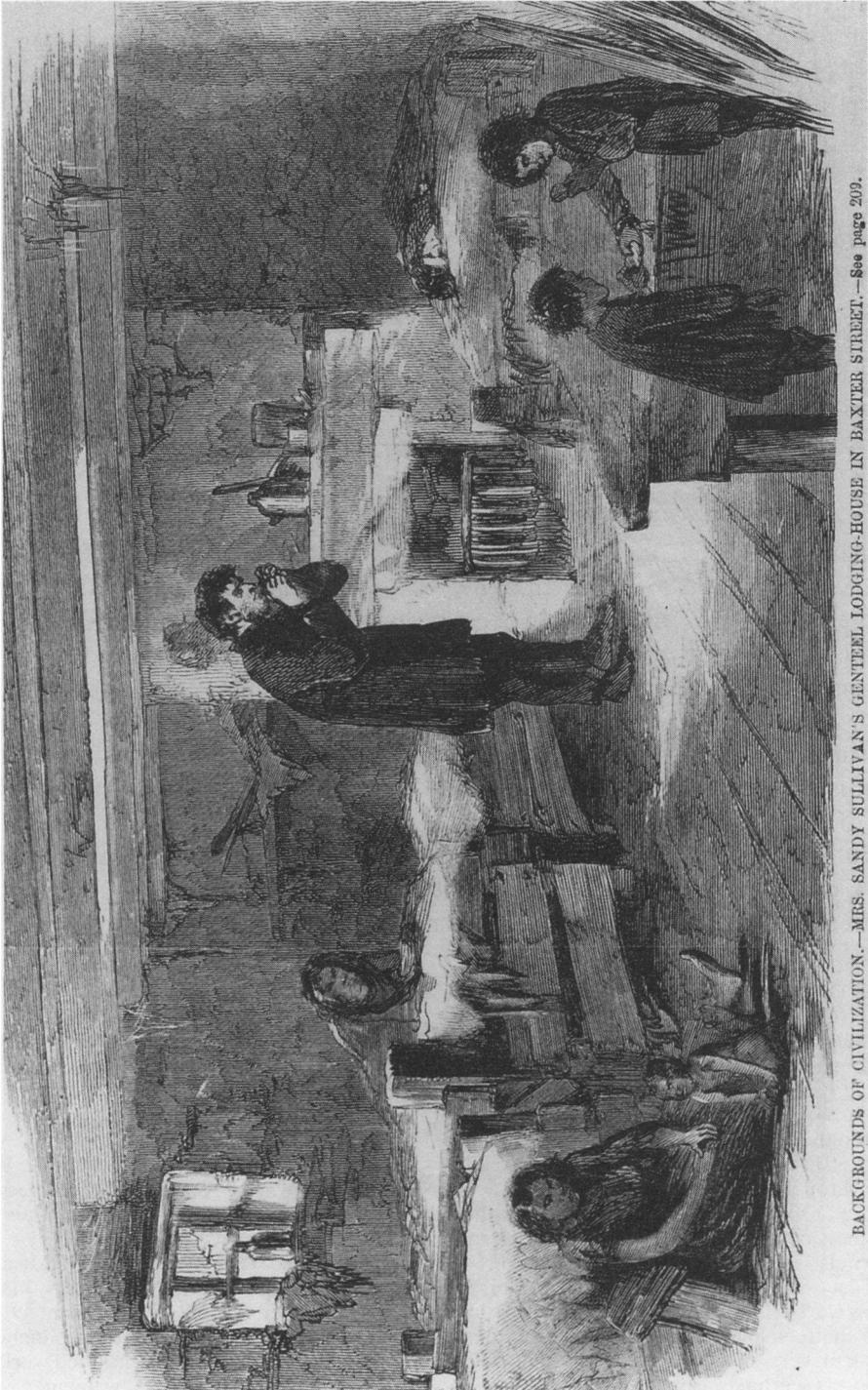
⁴⁵ Twenty-eight percent of Five Points families rented space to boarders. Two-thirds of these families took in only one or two non-family members. These figures based on my analysis of Districts Three, Four, Five, and Six, Sixth Ward, 1855 New York State manuscript census returns, Old Records Division, New York County Clerk’s Office. (I consulted a microfilm copy made by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Family History Library.)

agreed an *Express* reporter accompanying the journalist from the *Times*, “such as were awake seemed to be quite sober.”⁴⁶

Continuing southward from the Sullivans’ lodging house toward the Five Points intersection, one reached 31 Orange Street. The five-story brick tenement at this address, one of the first residential structures of its size in the neighborhood, towered over the wooden hovels just described. Conditions in this building did not attract the attention of investigators in the antebellum period, perhaps because as a relatively new building it had not had much time to deteriorate. Yet the terrible crowding in its three-room (325-square-foot) apartments boggles the mind. Cornelius Shea and his wife Ellen, Lansdowne emigrants from Kenmare parish who had arrived in New York in April 1851, shared their apartment with three children and four lodgers. Widow Johanna McCarty squeezed her four children (ranging in age from six to twenty) and eight lodgers into her three-room flat. Three other dwellings held nine persons each, including that of Tuosist native Daniel Haley, another 1851 Lansdowne emigrant. Poverty did not push all Kerry natives to take in so many lodgers. Mary Shea of Kenmare and her husband Jeremiah, a Cork native, who had immigrated together in 1852, lived at 31 Orange with their twenty-three-year-old daughter Margaret (a servant) and just a single lodger. The combined incomes of father and daughter, plus the profit from the lodger, allowed them to forgo the intense crowding endured by their neighbors. Laborer Daniel Hagerty, another 1851 Lansdowne emigrant from Kenmare, also lived at 31 Orange in 1855 with his wife Mary and his younger brother Patrick, also a laborer. Their incomes enabled them to dispense with boarders altogether. Thus, while the relatively large apartments at 31 Orange (two-room, 225-square-foot abodes were more typical) provided more spacious accommodations for families with dual incomes, their size merely encouraged many renters to cram even more lodgers than usual into the still crowded spaces.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *New York Times*, July 1, 1859; *New York Express* quoted in Samuel B. Halliday, *The Lost and Found: or, Life among the Poor* (New York, 1859), 207–08; *New York Illustrated News* (February 18, 1860): 216. I have identified this boardinghouse as the one portrayed in the *Illustrated News* because the only “Sandy” Sullivan I came across out of the hundred or so Sullivans in the various Five Points records is the Sandy Sullivan listed as living at 35 Orange by his daughter Mary when she opened a savings account in March 1854. See Account 6524, Emigrant Savings Bank Test Books; Glazier, *Famine Immigrants*, 6: 647. Sandy and Catharine Sullivan (both age 45), with their four children (aged 4 to 22) and eight boarders, are listed in the 1860 census, apparently at that same address. See Family 227, p. 136, Second District, Sixth Ward, 1860 United States manuscript census, National Archives.

⁴⁷ Dwelling 31, Second Division, Third Electoral District, Sixth Ward, 1855 New York Census; Accounts 4983, 5800, 6773, and 7504, Emigrant Savings Bank Test Books; wedding of Daniel Haley, October 14, 1857, Marriage Register, Church of the Transfiguration, 29 Mott Street, New York. The other block dominated by Lansdowne immigrants, Anthony Street from the Five Points intersection to Centre Street, was virtually as squalid as Orange Street. Its most notorious stretch, a cul-de-sac jutting off to the north known officially as Little Water Street but popularly referred to as Cow Bay, was renowned for “the extreme wretchedness which abounds on every hand.” Experts called Cow Bay “the very lowest and worst place in New-York.” By 1857, New Yorkers associated Cow Bay with Kerry immigrants, but because of the imprecise numbering of its houses, it is impossible to determine with certainty if any Lansdowne immigrants lived there. *The Old Brewery and the New Mission House at the Five Points, by the Ladies of the Mission* (New York, 1854), 104 (“extreme wretchedness”); *Monthly Record of the Five Points House of Industry* 1 (January 1858): 219 (“very lowest”); Solon Robinson, *Hot Corn: Life Scenes in New York Illustrated* (New York, 1854), 209, 307; “EYE WITNESS” to the Editor, *New York Times*, July 7, 1857. Overcrowding was a problem for the Irish who settled in England as well. See John Haslett and W. J. Lowe, “Household Structure and Overcrowding among the Lancashire Irish, 1851–1871,” *Histoire sociale* 10 (May 1977): 45–58; and Enid Gaudie, *Cruel Habitations: A History of Working-Class Housing, 1780–1918* (London, 1974).



BACKGROUNDS OF CIVILIZATION.—MRS. SANDY SULLIVAN'S GENTLE LODGING-HOUSE IN BAXTER STREET.—See page 209.

FIGURE 5: Woodcut of "Sandy Sullivan's Lodging House," 1860. Probably the establishment toured by the *New York Times* and *New York Express* reporters in 1859. Most Lansdowne immigrants took in borders informally to supplement their incomes, but some, like Sullivan, eventually expanded the practice into a full-time occupation. *New York Illustrated News* (February 18, 1860): 216.

Genteel Americans wondered how and why immigrants tolerated such miserable conditions. Compared to their Irish cabins, however, Five Pointers may have perceived their tenements, at least initially, as somewhat pleasant. Five Pointers had wooden instead of dirt floors, typically with “bits of carpets” on them. Immigrants also undoubtedly preferred their plaster ceilings to the insect-filled thatch roofs that they had known in Kerry, and in winter a tenement’s warm stove was far preferable to the open fire typically found in smoke-filled Irish cabins. Two large windows per dwelling did not seem like many to American natives, but to an Irish immigrant whose home had never before held more than a tiny pane or two, Five Points apartments must have seemed almost bright. And given that they had generally lived in Ireland in a single ten-by-thirteen-foot room, the typical two-room, 225-square-foot Five Points apartment might have seemed spacious, at least to those who did not take in many boarders. So while conditions in the Lansdowne immigrants’ tenements were bad, they were really no worse, and in some ways were actually much better, than their living conditions in Ireland. This undoubtedly explains why even Five Points immigrants could write glowing, boastful letters to loved ones back in Ireland.⁴⁸

ONE WOULD IMAGINE that Lansdowne immigrants chose to live in such dilapidated, overcrowded tenements because they could afford nothing else. In fact, male Lansdowne immigrants did hold the city’s lowest-paying, least desirable jobs. Lansdowne immigrants were much more likely than the typical Irish Five Pointer to toil as a menial day laborer, the job held by the overwhelming majority of the neighborhood’s unskilled workers (see Table 2). Conversely, natives of the Lansdowne estate were significantly less likely to own their own businesses or hold lower-status “white-collar” jobs and were ten times less likely than the typical Five Pointers to work as skilled artisans.⁴⁹

Frustratingly little is known about the lives of nineteenth-century America’s day laborers. Construction jobs probably provided most of such workers’ employment. Day laborers could dig foundations, carry heavy hods full of bricks and mortar to

⁴⁸ [James D. Burn], *Three Years among the Working-Classes in the United States during the War* (London, 1865), 14–15 (quotation). Although few letters written by Five Points immigrants survive, see “Eliza Quin” to “Dear Parents,” January 22, 1848, in House of Commons, “Colonisation from Ireland: Select Committee, House of Commons, Third Report with Appendix,” *Sessional Papers*, 1849 (86), 11: 128, in *Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers*, “Emigration” series (Shannon, 1969), 5: 128.

⁴⁹ For the occupational comparisons in this paragraph and in Table 2, I grouped Five Pointers’ vocations into the following categories: The single Irish-born professional in my Five Points sample was a physician. “Business owners” include shopkeepers, grocers, and food and liquor dealers. It is impossible, through the census, to determine if a “grocer” actually owned his or her own business or merely worked as a clerk for someone else. For the sake of consistency, all grocers have been placed in the “business owners” category. Lower-status white-collar workers were overwhelmingly clerks, but this category also includes a few non-clerical government employees who were neither skilled craftsmen nor menial laborers. The skilled manual workers category is composed of bedstead makers, blacksmiths, brass workers, bricklayers, cabinetmakers, cap makers, carpenters, carpet weavers, confectioners, coopers, hatters, locksmiths, machinists, masons, millers, musicians, plasterers, painters, plumbers, printers, shoemakers, silver and tin smiths, tailors, umbrella makers, and varnishers. Unskilled workers include laborers, cartmen, expressmen, porters, sailors, hostlers and grooms, waiters, watchmen, and policemen (so classified because people from any occupational category took these jobs when offered). Finally, “difficult to classify” includes occupations such as gentleman, speculator, “flayer,” farmer, and a “pocket book manufactory” worker.

TABLE 2
Irish Men's Employment by Occupational Category, 1850–1855

	<i>Lansdowne Five Points Bank Depositors</i>	<i>All Irish-Born Five Points Bank Depositors</i>	<i>All Irish-Born Five Points Residents</i>
Professionals	0%	0%	.4%
Business Owners	0%	6%	3%
Peddlers and Street Vendors	5%	10%	1%
Lower-Status White-Collar	0%	9%	3%
Skilled Manual Workers	3%	30%	34%
Unskilled Workers	90%	43%	58%
Difficult to Classify	2%	1%	1%

NOTES: All percentages rounded to nearest whole number except those smaller than one, which are rounded to nearest tenth of a percent. "All Irish-Born Five Points Residents" category is based on a random sample taken from the 1855 state census. Other categories based on information in the Emigrant Savings Bank Collection, Test Books and Ledgers, New York Public Library. The "All Irish-Born Five Points Bank Depositors" category is composed of all 192 Five Points Irish men and women who opened accounts among the bank's first 5,000 depositors. These accounts were opened from September 1850 to July 1853. The "Lansdowne" category includes information from all Lansdowne immigrants who opened accounts from 1851 through May 1855. For the vocations that comprise each occupational category, see n. 49.

the masons, and haul away the work-related debris. Municipal projects also employed many laborers, especially to dig sewer lines and pave streets. When outdoor work slowed in mid-summer, a laborer might find a job along the waterfront, loading or unloading sacks and crates from the hundreds of ships that plied New York City's waterways each week. Laborers' work was often very dangerous, and newspapers overflowed with reports of hod carriers killed in falls from ladders, longshoremen crushed by cargo, and laborers buried by the collapsing walls of unfinished buildings. A fair share of these work-related fatalities must have befallen Lansdowne families.⁵⁰

Dangerous as a laborer's work might be, his greatest fear was probably not death but unemployment. On days too cold or wet to work, the laborer did not get paid. Some might find steady employment at a single construction site; others had to look for a new position each day. Sudden sickness or a job-related injury could also throw one out of work at any time, since no position was held open for a laborer while he recuperated. Even in perfect health, observed the *New York Tribune* at this time, only "an energetic and lucky man . . . can make more than two hundred and fifty days' work as an out-door laborer in the course of a year, while the larger number will not average two hundred." During recessions, many laborers could not secure more than one or two days of paid work in a week. Such unemployment wreaked havoc on family finances. "A month's idleness, or a fortnight's sickness, and what misery!" observed an Irish journalist. Some Lansdowne immigrants left New York City permanently to search for steadier work. Upstate New York, Massachusetts, Ohio, and (to a lesser extent) Virginia were their favorite destina-

⁵⁰ For neighborhood construction accidents, see *New York Tribune*, December 4, 1850; *New York Herald*, November 5, 1853. The best work on laborers, although it does not consider them in the urban context, is Peter Way, *Common Labour: Workers and the Digging of the North American Canals, 1780–1860* (New York, 1993).

tions.⁵¹ Many others undoubtedly made seasonal journeys to seek employment, especially in the winter, when there was little work for the city's laborers, a practice the Lansdowne immigrants would have found familiar. The laborer's life was thus one of the hardest, most dangerous, and most financially precarious in Five Points, and for at least his first few years in New York, nearly every adult male Lansdowne immigrant found himself forced to take such work.⁵²

Children contributed significantly to the family coffers in the Lansdowne enclave, either to supplement their parents' unreliable incomes or to replace it in the case of households headed by widows. Many youngsters worked as newsboys. Tim Sullivan, the son of Lansdowne emigrants Daniel Sullivan and Catherine Connelly, lived at 25 Baxter (formerly Orange) Street in 1870 when at age seven he began hawking newspapers. The other trade most popular with Five Points boys was shoe shining. Sullivan, in fact, had shined shoes outside a police stationhouse before peddling newspapers. Bootblacks typically ranged in age from ten to sixteen, although some (such as Sullivan) started work much younger. Other boys earned money in more unusual ways. Many Five Points saloons featured bowling alleys, where Charles Dickens observed that young lads "wait upon the players, setting up the pins, returning the balls, fetching a light for their segars, supplying them with liquor when thirsty," and receiving in return a small wage from the saloonkeeper and tips from the bowlers. One such "pin boy" was Timothy Harrington, a Lansdowne immigrant who had left Kerry in the summer of 1851 with a brother and three sisters. When the fourteen-year-old opened a savings account in 1853 with an initial deposit of \$30 (about \$640 today), he was living with his seventeen-year-old brother John in the heart of the Lansdowne enclave at 155 Anthony Street. Girls had fewer opportunities to earn cash than did their brothers. Some made significant sums sweeping the mud away from street corners on rainy days, receiving tips in return from passersby. In the late summer and early fall, they might sell hot corn from steaming buckets. But girls were more likely to contribute to the family economy in other ways, especially scavenging coal or kindling from waterfront docks. Such work sustained many an impoverished Five Points family.⁵³

Lansdowne women also contributed to their families' incomes, and in the cases of widows and unmarried women sometimes supported their dependents single-handedly (see Table 3). The employment figures for Lansdowne women, however, are somewhat misleading. Most Lansdowne immigrants earned extra income taking

⁵¹ The dispersion of the Lansdowne immigrants can be followed to some extent by the advertisements they placed in the missing persons column of the *Boston Pilot*. See, for example, the ads of February 28, April 3, June 19, August 28, October 2, 16, 1852, April 9, 30, August 6, September 3, 10, October 1, 29, 1853. I am grateful to Ruth-Ann Harris of Boston College, who has indexed these advertisements by Irish parish of origin, for bringing them to my attention.

⁵² *New York Tribune*, May 8, 13, 14 (quotation), 1850; John F. Maguire, *The Irish in America* (London, 1868), 232–33.

⁵³ Edward W. Martin [James D. McCabe], *The Secrets of the Great City* (Philadelphia, 1868), 261–64; Owen Kildare, *My Mamie Rose* (New York, 1903), 45–51; "C. L. B." in *New York Times*, March 12, 1853; John Morrow, *A Voice from the Newsboys* (New York, 1860), 128–32; *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (December 29, 1855): 43; *New York Times*, October 16, 1902; Family 79, Sixth Election District, Sixth Ward, 1870 United States manuscript census (identified as Sullivan in Daniel Czitrom, "Underworlds and Underdogs: Big Tim Sullivan and Metropolitan Politics in New York, 1889–1913," *Journal of American History* 78 [1991]: 539–40); Charles Dickens, *American Notes* (1842; rpt. edn., London, 1985), 79; Account 5735, Emigrant Savings Bank Test Books. Harrington managed to add only \$5 more to his account before closing it in March 1854, just five months after he had opened it.

TABLE 3
Women's Employment by Occupational Category, 1851–1856

	<i>Female Five Points Lansdowne Immigrants' with Bank Accounts</i>	<i>All Five Points Irishwomen</i>
Needle Trades	7%	48%
Household Servants	52%	25%
Laundresses	28%	8%
Boardinghouse Keepers	not available	13%
Miscellaneous	14%	6%

NOTES: All percentages rounded to nearest whole number. The “Lansdowne” category includes all Lansdowne immigrants who opened accounts at the Emigrant Savings Bank until August 1856. The “All Five Points Irishwomen” category is based on a random sample taken from the 1855 state census. The bank secretary failed to record the occupations of many women who did work for pay; see n. 54.

in boarders, an enterprise usually supervised by the female head of household, yet of the twenty-nine Lansdowne women who listed occupations when they opened bank accounts, none described themselves as boardinghouse keepers. Perhaps taking in boarders was so common in the Lansdowne enclave that neither the Lansdowne women nor the bank secretary considered it an “occupation.”⁵⁴ Nor do the bank records reflect the full range of work Lansdowne women engaged in outside the home, for we know from other sources that some of them (usually widows or their children) turned to one of the most degrading of nineteenth-century occupations—ragpicking. Ragpickers scavenged the city’s ash bins and rubbish barrels looking for rags, bones, scrap meat, and metal or glass that could be sold to paper producers, fat renderers, candle and soap makers, and other manufacturers.

One can only speculate on the extent to which Lansdowne women participated in the female trade most associated with Five Points—prostitution. Writing in 1849, just before the Lansdowne immigrants arrived, New York journalist George Foster said of Five Points that “nearly every house and cellar is a grogery below and a brothel above.” A minister who worked with the neighborhood’s most impoverished residents remembered that on his arrival there in 1850 “every house was a brothel, and every brothel a hell.”⁵⁵

Could such accounts of the ubiquity of Five Points prostitution have been true, or were they merely the exaggerated fantasies of imaginative or bigoted writers? At first glance, the claim that “every house was a brothel” seems ridiculous. Yet a

⁵⁴ Women were listed as account holders on 105 of the 153 Lansdowne accounts. Of these, 48 were joint accounts opened by married couples, 11 were opened by married women who did not list their husbands as joint account holders, 5 were joint accounts with children rather than a husband, and 21 were opened by women who were widows or had never been married. The remaining 20 were second or third accounts opened by the same depositors. In all but one case, the bank secretary recorded employment information for women only when there was no husband or working-age son serving as a joint account holder. Of the 47 accounts opened by women that did not list male breadwinners as joint account holders, the bank secretary recorded occupations for 28 of them, wrote “none” for the occupation for 12 of them, and left the remainder blank.

⁵⁵ [George G. Foster], *New York in Slices: by an Experienced Carver, Being the Original Slices Published in the N.Y. Tribune* (New York, 1849), 23; letter of L. M. Pease in *New York Times*, November 19, 1852.

review of the New York district attorney's indictment records reveals that for the two blocks that composed the Lansdowne enclave, such allegations were essentially accurate. Twenty of the twenty-five dwellings on Anthony Street between Centre and Orange housed prostitutes at some point during the 1850s. Brothel proprietors were likewise prosecuted in thirteen of the seventeen residences on Orange Street just north of the Five Points intersection in the same period. Five Points policemen were actually renowned for ignoring the neighborhood vice trade. Prosecutions usually ensued only when neighbors repeatedly complained about persistently raucous behavior. Thus it seems likely that brothels were found in most Lansdowne tenement buildings during the early 1850s.⁵⁶

There is no evidence, however, that Lansdowne immigrants themselves were particularly active in the Five Points sex trade. Their common surnames—Sullivan, Shea, Sheehan, and Harrington—are noticeably absent from the Five Points indictment records. Census records also indicate that Lansdowne immigrants did not rent their tenements' commercial spaces, where most brothels operated under the guise of saloons and dance halls. Most indicted Five Points brothel keepers had lived in New York far longer than the typical Lansdowne immigrant. It is possible that Lansdowne women worked as prostitutes in brothels run by others, because it was the brothel *keepers* rather than their courtesans who were typically prosecuted. Yet while some Lansdowne immigrants may have worked as prostitutes, the evidence suggests that most lived among the neighborhood's brothels rather than working in them. Most Irish-American women who resorted to prostitution lived by themselves—most had emigrated on their own to work as domestics and had no family members to turn to for help when their financial circumstances became dire. Because almost all the Lansdowne immigrants had arrived in the United States with other family members, they had friends or kinsmen who could assist them in desperate times and were therefore less likely than other Five Pointers to become prostitutes. The Lansdowne immigrants, especially those with children, must have nevertheless found it embarrassing and humiliating to have to live in tenements where the sex trade was so brazenly and noisily carried on.

⁵⁶ In other sections of the Five Points neighborhood, prostitution was far less pervasive. In the same two decades, there were only two prosecutions for commercial sex in the eighty or so buildings on Mulberry Street below Bayard, only two indictments in the sixty buildings on Bayard Street from the Bowery to Orange, and none on Mott Street below Bayard. Prostitution in the Lansdowne enclave had decreased significantly by the mid-1850s due to the efforts of Protestant ministers who set up missions at the Five Points intersection. Brothel locations are based on a list compiled by Professor Timothy Gilfoyle, Loyola University of Chicago, in the possession of the author. Gilfoyle's inventory is based primarily on criminal indictments. I have examined most but not all of these records relating to Five Points. For prosecutions involving the Lansdowne enclave, see, for example, indictments of May 23, 1851 (151 Anthony and 6 Little Water Streets), January 23, 1852 (145 Anthony), April 22, 1852 (163 Anthony and 33, 35, 36 ½, 40, and 41 Orange), and April 23, 1852 (143, 149, and 157 Anthony), New York County District Attorney's Indictment Papers, New York Municipal Archives. These records must be used with some caution. While some of those arrested may have been innocent, notations on the indictment papers indicate that the overwhelming majority were convicted, pled guilty, or promised to abandon the premises (thus implying guilt). In addition, it was possible to be charged with conducting a "disorderly house" that was merely a raucous saloon rather than a brothel. After examining the indictments and the accompanying affidavits, however, I accept Gilfoyle's contention that the vast majority charged with this offense probably promoted prostitution.



FIGURE 6: Infamous for its brothels, Anthony Street (renamed Worth in 1854), is shown here in the mid-1860s from the Five Points intersection facing west. This block, between Orange and Centre streets, was one of the two on which the majority of Lansdowne immigrants settled. In the building at the corner on the left, Bridget Mangin operated a well-known bordello. Andrew Crown's grocery and saloon occupied the ground floor. Courtesy of the New-York Historical Society.

FROM ALL APPEARANCES, THEN, the Lansdowne immigrants must have been some of the most impoverished residents of Five Points, a neighborhood renowned for its destitution. After all, the Lansdowne men were especially likely to be lowly paid menial laborers, and they lived with their families in the district's most rundown tenements. The Lansdowne immigrants' propensity to open accounts at the Emigrant Savings Bank makes it possible to compare these appearances with reality. Of the 12,500 accounts opened at the bank in its first six years of operation (from September 1850 to August 1856), 153 were opened by Five Points Lansdowne immigrants. Although it is difficult to determine what proportion of Lansdowne immigrants had accounts, it appears that about 50 percent of the Lansdowne

families living in Five Points had opened one by mid-1855. These account holders are not necessarily a representative sample, of course. It may be that only those who had found financial success bothered to open them. Even so, the bank records provide a rare glimpse into the economic fortunes of a very significant number of the Lansdowne immigrants.⁵⁷

The bank ledgers suggest that, even while living in Five Points, the Lansdowne immigrants saved far more money than one would have imagined given their wretched surroundings and low-paying jobs. Take the case of the three Tuosist natives who, on July 2, 1853, walked the half mile from Five Points to the bank's Chambers Street office to open accounts. The first, Honora Shea, had been one of the earliest Lansdowne-assisted immigrants to arrive in New York, disembarking from the *American Eagle* in mid-March 1851 with her daughter Ellen Harrington, who the bank secretary described as "an illegitimate child, aged 14 yrs." Although Honora apparently did not live with a male breadwinner, and rented quarters in the decrepit tenement at 35 Orange Street, she was able to open her account with an initial deposit of \$160, the equivalent of more than \$3,400 today. The next account was assigned to laborer Patrick Murphy and his wife Mary, who lived next door to Shea at 33 ½ Orange and had also arrived in New York from Tuosist in March 1851. They made an initial deposit of \$250, a sum worth roughly \$5,300 in contemporary terms. Bank officials gave the subsequent account to "washer" Barbara Sullivan, whose cramped apartment, filled with her six children, son-in-law, and six boarders, was described earlier. Sullivan, who at this point also lived at 33 ½ Orange but had arrived in New York in September 1851, made the smallest opening deposit of the three, \$135 (or about \$2,900 today). Later in the day, a fourth Tuosist native, forty-two-year-old Judy O'Neill, opened a joint account with her nineteen-year-old daughter Catherine (Judy was either widowed or never married). The O'Neills lived at 33 ½ Orange as well and had arrived in New York at the end of the initial Lansdowne flotilla in May 1851. Judy told the bank secretary that she was not employed outside the home but that her daughter worked in a tobacco factory. They made an initial deposit of \$148 (about \$3,100 today). These four Lansdowne families, who had probably arrived in New York virtually penniless, had managed despite their meager incomes to squirrel away *very* substantial sums.⁵⁸

These depositors opened their accounts with more money than the average Lansdowne immigrant, but not a lot more. The median initial bank deposit of the Lansdowne Five Points immigrants was \$100, while the average was \$102. This was slightly more than the \$96 initial deposit made by the average Five Pointer. Many Lansdowne immigrants, of course, started their accounts with just a few dollars and closed them a few weeks later, either because they needed the money or because

⁵⁷ Fully 152 of the 153 Lansdowne accounts were opened by immigrants who had arrived in New York by the time the state census was taken in June 1855. If we conservatively estimate the size of the average Lansdowne nuclear family to be four persons, then these 152 accounts may represent nearly 60 percent of the 1,000 Lansdowne immigrants in Five Points as of that date. (Some opened more than one account, however, which is why I put the figure at 50 rather than 60 percent.) That this estimate is fairly accurate is confirmed by a survey of the Lansdowne immigrants listed in the 1855 census as living on Orange Street above the Five Points intersection. Sixty percent of the Lansdowne households on this block had accounts at the Emigrant Savings Bank.

⁵⁸ Accounts 4737, 4738, 4739, and 4745, Emigrant Savings Bank Test Books and Account Ledgers; Glazier, *Famine Immigrants*, 7: 84 (where the O'Neills are listed as "Jude" and "Cath." Corkery).

they did not believe that their savings were safe in a bank. Only about half the depositors made significant additions to their accounts before closing them—just 51 percent of the Lansdowne immigrants ever managed to increase their initial balance by 50 percent or more. Many of the accounts were closed during the financial panics of 1854 and 1857. The Lansdowne immigrants' rush to withdraw all their money at once indicates that their runs on the bank were inspired by fear of the institution's failure rather than poverty brought on by these severe recessions.

It appears that most Lansdowne immigrants saw the bank as a place to safely keep (and draw interest on) nest eggs they had already managed to accumulate before opening their accounts. This would explain why so many Lansdowne immigrants did not add substantially to their initial deposits, even when they kept their accounts open for extended periods. Bonane native Mary Flynn, for example, was in her early sixties when she opened an account in August 1853. Although she was married, her husband was not listed as a joint account holder. Mary, who told the bank secretary that she had no occupation, opened her account with \$45, and in less than a year she had doubled her money. During the recession winters of 1855 and 1858, she withdrew as much as half her savings but always worked her way back to the \$90 level within a year. That was the balance, give or take five dollars, at which her account remained into the late 1860s. Flynn undoubtedly saw \$90 as the appropriate size for her family's emergency fund.⁵⁹

In 28 percent of the Lansdowne accounts, the immigrants accrued \$250 or more—\$5,300 in modern terms—substantial financial resources for famine-era immigrants. (Only 22 percent of non-Lansdowne Five Pointers ever reached a balance of \$250 or more in their accounts.)⁶⁰ Laborer Dennis Sullivan, for instance, a widower with three children and a native of Cloonee townland in Tuosist, opened an account in February 1854 with a \$98 deposit. Despite the two intervening recessions, Sullivan had increased his savings to more than \$300 (\$6,400 today) by 1858. Laborer Murty Sullivan, born just a mile or two down the road from Dennis in the Tuosist townland of Ardea, was also an avid saver. Murty arrived in New York in April 1852, opened his bank account in February 1853, and when the panic of 1857 induced him to close it, he had amassed \$367.90 (\$7,800 today). Bonane native Daniel O'Connor and his wife Honora opened their account in May 1853. When the couple's balance peaked in 1860, it had reached nearly \$450 (about \$9,600 today). Laborer Timothy Shea and his wife Johanna resided with their four children on Anthony Street when he opened his account in December 1852 with \$112. By the time the Sheas closed it in July 1860, the Kenmare natives had accumulated \$495 (more than \$10,500 today). A second Timothy and Johanna Shea from Kenmare, who arrived in New York in 1853, had amassed \$592 (nearly \$12,600 in contemporary terms) by July 1857. A third Timothy Shea (sometimes called "O'Shea"), this one a "bill carrier" who had emigrated from Tuosist at age forty-eight in 1851, managed along with his wife Honora to save \$658 (about \$14,000 today) in three accounts by July 1857, the highest sum attained by any of the Lansdowne immigrants among the bank's first 12,500 depositors. The three Tim

⁵⁹ Account 5155, Emigrant Savings Bank Test Books and Account Ledgers.

⁶⁰ The highest balance achieved by Lansdowne immigrants was, on average, exactly \$200. The highest balance reached by non-Lansdowne Five Pointers was, on average, \$234.

Sheas and their spouses had fared amazingly well for men and women who had been on the brink of starvation at the beginning of the decade.⁶¹

What explains the Lansdowne immigrants' surprising ability to save? Perhaps the privation they had experienced in County Kerry enabled them to limit expenditures to the bare minimum in the years immediately after their arrival. Living in Five Points, they could pay among the lowest rents in New York (from \$4.50 to \$6 per month for a two-room dwelling), and taking in their countrymen as lodgers enabled the Lansdowne immigrants to recoup a significant proportion of their housing expenses. Having so many of their kinsmen and former neighbors with them in New York also undoubtedly helped the immigrants. Virtually overnight, they created a large, intricate network that could be used to help find jobs, housing, and even spouses. And if someone through sickness, injury, or death became unable to work, there were plenty of relatives around to help out. There were many Lansdowne immigrants who did not fare as well as the three Tim Sheas. For widows with young children, life was particularly hard. But the noticeable absence of Lansdowne surnames in the relief records of the Five Points Mission (where hundreds of desperate Five Points Catholics turned for help despite the institution's Methodist affiliation) suggests that the Lansdowne immigrants took care of each other—helping widows find new mates and unemployed men and women new jobs.

But what explains the apparent anomaly of the Lansdowne immigrants' menial jobs and poor living conditions on the one hand and their substantial bank balances on the other? It appears that, once they got settled and found work, the Lansdowne immigrants focused all their energies on saving money to establish nest eggs for their families, choosing to stay in Five Points even after they could afford to move to more spacious apartments in cleaner and safer neighborhoods. Inasmuch as many of them were also sending money to loved ones in Ireland, either to help support aged parents or to pay for relatives' emigration, the typical Lansdowne immigrant's ability to squirrel away \$100 or more in just a few years is truly remarkable. Some undoubtedly moved out of Five Points or to less squalid blocks within the neighborhood once they had established these competencies. But many, despite their substantial savings, decided to stay in the Lansdowne enclave, either because they enjoyed being surrounded by so many fellow Kerry natives, or because they sought to continue saving as much money as possible by paying low Five Points rents. That so many of the Lansdowne immigrants' account balances remained relatively constant indicates that once they reached their savings goal, they began to raise their standard of living by spending more of their income. Through a concerted scheme of self-sacrifice, then, most of the Lansdowne immigrants in Five Points managed to improve their lives significantly, from both the misery of County Kerry and the initial privations of Five Points.

⁶¹ For a list of all the accounts opened by Lansdowne immigrants during the bank's first six years of operation, see Anbinder, *Five Points: The Nineteenth-Century New York Neighborhood That Invented Tap Dance, Stole Elections, and Became the World's Most Notorious Slum* (New York, 2001), 465. The accounts described in this paragraph are 1235, 3424, 3735, 4409, 6473, 7464, 12046, and 12419. Occupations are based on information given at the time an account was opened. By the time the high balance was achieved, the account holders may have moved on to more lucrative employment.

EVENTUALLY, THE LANSDOWNE IMMIGRANTS did begin to move out of Five Points, but it is impossible to determine exactly how long they remained in the district or where they went once they left. There were simply too many Sheas and Sullivans (and even Ellen Hollands) in New York to allow the tracking of the Lansdowne immigrants after they moved out of the neighborhood. That young bootblack and newsboy Tim Sullivan was living in Five Points in 1870 demonstrates that some of them still resided there, but by then Italian immigrants occupied the vast majority of the apartments in the buildings that Lansdowne immigrants had once dominated. At that point, most Lansdowne immigrants had probably moved further uptown to other, more prosperous Irish enclaves.

We do know that the Lansdowne immigrants had undergone a remarkable transformation in a few short years from destitute Irish peasants to moderately successful New Yorkers. In Ireland, they had been among the most wretched of that nation's inhabitants. The Lansdowne tenants survived six years of unrelenting hardship in Ireland during the famine, a period of privation far longer than that of the typical famine-era emigrant. In a period when hundreds of thousands of desperate and impoverished Irish men, women, and children fled to North America, the Lansdowne immigrants were singled out by observers on both sides of the Atlantic for their particularly dire circumstances. Many apparently perished in the "Lansdowne Ward" of New York Hospital, so-called because many of the marquis's former tenants died there soon after their arrival.⁶² Yet while these immigrants may have first settled in Five Points because they could afford nothing else, they chose to stay even after they could have easily moved to more respectable neighborhoods. In just a few years in New York, many of these once "unfortunate creatures" achieved a modicum of financial security. While Trench may have exaggerated the immigrants' fortunes when he talked of them returning with chains of gold, by 1860 a large number of the immigrants had in fact saved enough to purchase such baubles had they chosen to do so.

The fate of young Tim Sullivan, the bootblack and newsboy, reflects the myriad opportunities that New York offered to the Lansdowne immigrants and their children. In his various jobs delivering newspapers, Sullivan developed a network of contacts among the city's newsboys and periodical dealers. Even though by his teenage years he worked in the news plants themselves, he simultaneously became a newspaper distributor, because the distribution managers knew that Sullivan, through his web of newsboys, could guarantee that their papers would be sold throughout the city. "Every new newspaper that come out, I obtained employment on, on account of my connection with the news-dealers all over the City of New York," Sullivan recalled in 1902. His income from these operations must have been significant, because by his late teens he was ready to open his first saloon, and by his early twenties he purportedly had interests in three or four. Sullivan was also very popular, and at twenty-three, without any prior legislative experience, he was elected to the New York state assembly. Although first chosen for office as an

⁶² For the Lansdowne Ward, see *Dublin Review*, n.s., 12 (January–April 1869): 4–17; *Tralee Chronicle*, February 26, 1869; and *Freeman's Journal*, November 20, 1880, all quoted in Lyne, *Lansdowne Estate*, 92–94; Charles Russell, "New Views on Ireland," or, *Irish Land: Grievances: Remedies*, 3d edn. (London, 1880), 47; Lansdowne, *Glanerought and the Petty-Fitzmaurices*, 129.

insurgent running against the city's "Tammany Hall" Democratic organization, "Five Points Sullivan" soon began cooperating with Tammany and quickly moved up through the ranks. He eventually served in the state senate and the United States House of Representatives. By the turn of the century, this child of Lansdowne immigrants had become "Big Tim" Sullivan, "the political ruler of down-town New York." Some observers considered him the second most powerful politician in the city, after Tammany "boss" Richard Croker. Sullivan also became quite wealthy. Critics charged that his fortune had been built from payoffs exacted from gambling and prostitution syndicates in his district. But "Big Tim" insisted that he had never taken a bribe in his life and that his substantial income derived from shrewd investments in vaudeville theaters and other legitimate businesses. No matter what the origin of his fortune may have been, Sullivan remembered his humble origins and shared his wealth with his less prosperous constituents, giving away thousands of pairs of shoes and Christmas dinners each year.⁶³

Sullivan's allies also remembered their leader's roots. When the city decided to cut a new street through a tenement district about a mile north of Five Points to ease the flow of traffic to the recently opened Williamsburg Bridge, the Board of Aldermen voted to name the new thoroughfare Kenmare Street. The lawmaker who proposed the name told the press in 1911 that he had chosen it in honor of Sullivan's mother, a Kenmare native, because she had "exercised a motherly care over me as she did over hundreds of boys on the east side."⁶⁴ It is impossible to determine if the alderman in question truly owed this debt of gratitude to Mrs. Sullivan or merely sought to curry favor with his principal political patron. Whatever the case, Kenmare Street was christened in the very week that, exactly sixty years earlier, Ellen Holland had first set foot in New York.

In that span of time, the Kenmare immigrants had risen from civic embarrassments to city leaders. Whether the Lansdowne immigrants' bank accounts were typical, and to what extent their particularly harrowing pre-migration experiences affected their ability to save, is a matter of conjecture. Only when historians have analyzed both the financial and biographical data in the thousands of non-Lansdowne Emigrant Savings Bank accounts will we be able to grasp the full significance of Ellen Holland's story. Yet whatever such future studies may reveal, a few things are certain. First, the degree of financial success achieved by the Lansdowne immigrants despite their decrepit surroundings suggests that the famine immigrants adapted to their surroundings far better and more quickly than we have previously imagined. After the initial year or so of adjustment, the Lansdowne immigrants stayed in Five Points not because they had to but because they chose to. In addition, the Lansdowne immigrants' story demonstrates the value of tracing the lives of famine-era immigrants back to Ireland, adding a transatlantic perspective that has generally been lacking in the field of immigration history. That Five Pointers from the Lansdowne estate achieved their modicum of financial security despite the extraordinary hardships (even by Irish standards) that they faced before,

⁶³ *New York Sun* (April 18, 1889): 5; *New York Herald* (October 16, 1902): 5; (May 19, 1907), magazine sect., part 1, pp. 1-2; *New York Times* (April 30, 1887); (October 16, 1902): 3; Czitrom, "Underworlds and Underdogs," 541-42.

⁶⁴ *New York Times* (March 2, 1911): 2.

during, and immediately after their arrival in New York makes those monetary accomplishments all the more remarkable. Their saga demonstrates that we still have a lot to learn about how nineteenth-century immigrants adjusted to—and were transformed by—life in modern America.

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