



Burlington's Ethnic Communities, 1860-1900

In the first decade of the twentieth century, a flood of immigrants was arriving in Burlington—additional links in the chain that had first been forged in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

By VINCENT FEENEY AND BRENDAN KELEHER

At a St. Patrick's Day party on March 17, 1904, John Shea, alderman for Burlington's heavily Irish Ward 3, boasted—in the wake of James Edmund Burke's reelection as mayor—that three-fifths of the city's population was Irish or of Irish extraction. Though Shea's claim, reported by the *Burlington Free Press* the next day, was highly inflated, it served as a reminder that early in its history Vermont's Queen City was a complex community of diverse ethnicities.

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In the little over a century since Shea made his boast, a number of articles, a few books, three master's theses, and even a locally produced television documentary have reported on various aspects of the city's ethnic past. Nevertheless, we believe that an overall picture of Burlington's nineteenth-century diversity is still missing.¹ In this article we present some data and stories for the time period 1860-1900, when the full mosaic of ethnic Burlington first appeared. Our purpose is to give a more detailed picture of how many first- and second-generation ethnics lived in Burlington in this period, and how they made a living.²

In 1860 Burlington was still a town—it would not be chartered as a city until 1864—and with a population of a little over 7,700 it was a relatively small place, albeit large by Vermont standards. It had, however, experienced substantial growth since 1830, when its residents numbered slightly more than 3,500. This expansion, which occurred mainly in the 1840s, was spurred by several developments: the town's emergence as a commercial center; the establishment of textile mills in Burlington and in the adjacent community of Winooski Falls; explosive growth in the lumber trade; and the completion of rail lines that connected the lakeside town to markets in southern New England and New York.

This activity attracted newcomers from the north: English and French speakers from Upper and Lower Canada, and a flood of Irish escaping the ravages of the great famine of the 1840s, many of whom used Canada as their landfall on their way to the United States. There were others: Scots and Englishmen, and a smattering of Welsh, Germans, and French. It was the Irish and the Canadians, however, who filled Burlington's hotels, boarding houses and tenements to overflowing. In 1860 there were 2,419 foreign-born people in town—approximately 31 percent of the population—including 1,218 born in Ireland and another 1,007 born in Canada.³

Place of birth alone, however, fails to convey the size of Burlington's Irish and Canadian communities. For that, we tabulated the number of children born in the United States to Canadian or Irish parents, a category we designated "second generation." In doing this we relied on the subject's mother's place of birth in order to allay any confusion when the parents came from different backgrounds, although in our study of Burlington couples in the 1900 census we found that this was a minor issue: 82 percent of Irish-born men married within their ethnic group, as did 73 percent of Canadian men.

By counting only individuals born in the U.S. with foreign-born mothers, we found that in 1860 there were 699 second-generation Irish Americans and 675 second-generation Canadian Americans. Combined with the foreign-born Irish, the Irish community numbered 1,917 individuals, while the total for the Canadian community was 1,672. Together, these two non-Yankee groups through the second generation comprised 47 percent of Burlington's population in 1860.

We also want to make clear that not all Canadians living in Burlington came from a French-speaking background. Of the 1,007 Canadian-born people living in the Queen City in 1860, 175, or 17 percent, came from English, Irish, Scottish, and even American backgrounds. This percentage remained relatively constant over the next four decades, dropping only to 13 percent by the end of the century. Two examples illustrate the complexity in assessing Canadian ethnicity through the census records. Lucius Bigelow, a prominent Burlington lumber dealer—he has been credited as being the first person to bring shipments of Canadian lumber into Burlington—and his wife were born in Vermont but appear to have moved to Ottawa sometime in the early 1830s to further his business interests.⁴ Five of their children were born in Canada; when the family returned to the States about 1850, the children appeared in the U.S. census records as Canadians.

The Scott family is another example. The husband, Alexander Scott, was born in Scotland and his wife Mary was born in Ireland. Their two children were Canadian born. For the U.S. census the children were entered in the Canadian count, but like the Bigelow children, were not French Canadians. Through the end of the nineteenth century there continued to be a significant number of individuals living in Burlington who, like the Bigelows and Scotts, were born in Canada but came from British and American backgrounds. It is for this reason that we generally use the term Canadian rather than French Canadian, although we use the latter when referring specifically to French-speaking Canadians.⁵

Completing our picture of Burlington's ethnic diversity in 1860 were 41 individuals variously described in the manuscript schedules as "B" (Black) or "M" (Mulatto). The presence of "Mulattos" presented us with a conundrum: Were they, in fact, light-skinned people possibly of mixed-race ancestry; or were at least some of them Native Americans, descendants of Vermont's indigenous Abenaki peoples? Abenakis were known to still live in the area, but in the forms used by the census takers in 1860 there was no provision to designate an individual "I" or Indian.

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| Country of Birth Person/Mother | 1860 | | 1880 | | 1900 | |
|-----------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | First | Second | First | Second | First | Second |
| | Generation | Generation | Generation | Generation | Generation | Generation |
| Canada | 1,007 | 675 | 1,655 | 2,000 | 2,463 | 2,789 |
| Ireland | 1,218 | 699 | 897 | 1,595 | 592 | 1,551 |
| England | 75 | | 84 | 113 | 147 | 188 |
| Scotland | 40 | | 53 | 43 | 54 | 83 |
| Germany | 26 | | 21 | 19 | 183 | 225 |
| Russia | - | | 2 | 1 | 184 | 102 |
| Italy | - | | 2 | 4 | 86 | 20 |
| Syria | - | | - | - | 41 | 35 |
| France | 7 | | 10 | 9 | 15 | 12 |
| Other Foreign Country | 3 | N/A | 9 | 5 | 53 | 59 |
| Total | 2,376 | 1,374 | 2,733 | 3,789 | 3,818 | 5,064 |
| Total City Population | 7,716 | | 11,365 | | 18,475 | |

Note 1: The Russians designated in the census were Jews. We identified them as such by place of birth, surnames, and residence in the city's Jewish neighborhood. In this way we also identified 64 German-born persons as Jews.

Note 2: In the tables we used the census designation of birthplace as Syria for the people who would later become known as Lebanese.

Perhaps race was as much a social construct as a designation of skin color: That is, was someone who associated with African Americans considered to be one of them? This seems to have been true with the Almon Clark family. Virginia-born Almon Clark, 48, is listed in the 1900 census as “C” (Colored). So are his wife Anna and their four children. But Anna was born in Ireland, as were her parents; and while it is possible that she and her parents were of African descent, it is not probable. So what do we have here? Maybe a confused census enumerator who, faced with a rare mixed-race family in Vermont, opted to describe them all as “Colored.” Anna was married to a man of color, her children were dark skinned, and therefore she was considered “colored.”

Some of the African Americans mentioned in the 1860 census had deep roots in Vermont: Twenty-two were natives of the Green Mountain State, and some had a Vermont connection that went back de-

cares. Sarah Bedford had been born in Vermont in 1790 and Mercy Thomas in 1815. Those not native to Vermont came from nearby states and Canada. None were born in the South, or at least would not admit to that given that the Fugitive Slave Law was then in effect.

The number of those in Burlington labeled Black, Mulatto, or Colored more than doubled between 1860 and 1900, but it was still a small community: 98 in 1900. And while most, 64, had been born in Vermont, only 4 were born in the Green Mountain State prior to the Civil War. Among the old Vermonters was Dan Prince, 57, a laborer whose parents were born in Vermont. Most of Burlington's other African Americans came from neighboring New York, Massachusetts, and Canada. Only 8 came from states of the old Confederacy.

OCCUPATIONS—1860

With their large numbers the Canadians and the Irish played a prominent role in Burlington's economic life in the latter half of the nineteenth century. They provided the muscle for the city's growth. In 1860 there were 2,273 city residents, male and female, working outside the home, and 1,208 of them were born abroad (53 percent). As one would expect of recently arrived immigrants, they were concentrated in low-paying unskilled occupations. Table 2 gives the totals of foreign-born males in each work category.

| Occupational Category | Males | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------|--------|---------|---------------|
| | Male City | Canada | Ireland | Other Foreign |
| | Total | Born | Born | Born |
| Manufacturing | | | | |
| Lumber Mills | 11 | 1 | - | - |
| Wood Products Manuf. | 56 | 11 | 5 | 1 |
| Textile Mills | 5 | 1 | | 2 |
| Other Manufacturing | 35 | 4 | 7 | 3 |
| Elementary Occupations | | | | |
| Servants, Laundry, etc. | 31 | 4 | 10 | 10 |
| Laborer, Day Laborer | 456 | 133 | 216 | 13 |
| Crafts & Related Trades | | | | |

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|--|-------|-----|-----|----|
| Needle Trades | 44 | 14 | 16 | 4 |
| Building Trades | 200 | 79 | 10 | 5 |
| Artisans & Other Trades | 301 | 72 | 36 | 8 |
| Sales & Service | 266 | 15 | 15 | 5 |
| Merchants | 72 | 4 | 6 | 4 |
| Other Sales & Service | 191 | 10 | 7 | 1 |
| Transportation | | | | |
| Railroads | 94 | 12 | 44 | 2 |
| Boats | 41 | 15 | 1 | 1 |
| Horse Powered | 61 | 22 | 10 | 1 |
| Educated Professions | 150 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Farming & Quarrying | 102 | 37 | 50 | 12 |
| Column Total | 2,116 | 440 | 439 | 78 |
| Note: City total includes the ethnic numbers in adjacent columns | | | | |

What the data reveal is that the Irish, with a population only slightly larger than that of the Canadians, constituted almost double the number of low-skilled laborers, while the Canadians far outnumbered the Irish in the building trades and other skilled work. These trends were related to history. The immigrant Irish had been tenant farmers with few skills marketable in an industrial setting and perforce had to take jobs that required little more than muscle, whereas many of the French Canadians—as historian Betsy Beattie has pointed out—had originally come to Burlington in the 1830s and 1840s with their building skills to help in the construction of the textile mills in Winooski Falls.⁶ They more naturally took up positions as carpenters, joiners, and plasterers and in the manufacture of wood products. That the Irish had a strong presence in railroad work was related to their role as laborers: in 1860 they were pick-and-shovel men, not engineers, conductors, or ticket agents.

One work category had a small but significant concentration of Canadians: maritime. As a port city, Burlington offered jobs as wharfingers (wharf owners or managers), sailors, sail makers, and ships' carpenters. When the census taker walked the docks in June 1860, he found 41 men attached to this trade, 15 of them born in Canada, but only one Irishman. The rest were American born. This disparity is un-

derstandable. For three generations ships and barges had shuttled between Burlington and ports in Québec and Ontario; by 1860 many Canadians were experienced boatmen.

That the census reported so few men or women working in the textile mills is odd given that Burlington was a mill town. A government publication, *The U.S. Census of Manufacturers, 1860*, reported that the Winooski Cotton Mill in Burlington employed 62 “hands,” and the Burlington Woolen Mill in neighboring Colchester had a workforce of 190 men and 150 women.⁷ So why had these workers not shown up in the Burlington census figures as textile workers? A number of factors may explain this disparity: Either workers in the mills described themselves as laborers or the census enumerators did, and thus these workers may have been obscured among the hundreds of individuals who were listed either as laborers or day laborers in the census.

Another factor may have been simple geography. In the days before regular public transportation service, people had to live close to their work places. Not until the late 1880s did a trolley line connect Burlington to Colchester, where the Burlington Woolen Mill was located. The great majority of woolen mill employees would have lived in Colchester’s Winooski village, not in Burlington. Even many of the “hands” who labored in the Winooski Cotton Company in Burlington may have resided in Colchester, for the cotton mill was located close to the Burlington-Winooski bridge, making the tenements of Winooski village more accessible to the cotton mill workers than the working-class neighborhoods on the west side of Burlington.

Not surprisingly, Canadians and Irish were hardly represented in professional occupations: Had we not categorized university students as professionals, there would have been none. And there were few merchants—a category we included in Table 2 under “Sales and Service”—in either group. The few ethnics who worked their way into the merchant class did so because they had a ready-made customer base: their fellow countrymen. The Tatro brothers, John and Peter, opened two grocery stores on North Street, the center of Burlington’s French Canadian community, while Irishman John Soragen ran a tavern on Water (Battery) Street in the heart of the city’s Irish neighborhood. Nearby, two apparently unrelated Sullivans, Bridget and Daniel, each owned a grocery. In a city where the Irish and French Canadians constituted almost half the population, those ethnic groups were woefully underrepresented as merchants.

| Occupational Category | Females | | | |
|-------------------------|------------|--------|---------|---------------|
| | Female | Canada | Ireland | Other Foreign |
| | City Total | Born | Born | Born |
| Elementary Occupations | | | | |
| Servants, Laundry, etc. | 351 | 48 | 189 | 1 |
| Laborer, Day Laborer | | | | |
| Crafts & Related Trades | | | | |
| Needle Trades | 69 | 16 | 25 | 4 |
| Column Total | 420 | 64 | 214 | 5 |

Women had few options for work outside the home, whether for the native born or the immigrant, and, in any case, market work was restricted to single women by custom and by the necessity of married women remaining at home to care for children.⁸ Certainly the textile mills employed many women, but the 1860 census provided little information. Outside of mill work, most immigrant women earned a living performing menial tasks, the great majority of them as servants; and the majority of the servants were Irish. Why Irish immigrant women outnumbered Canadians and the native born in this category is related to two factors: First, American and Canadian women found servant work demeaning.⁹ Irish women, having just escaped the horrendous conditions of the potato famine, had no such misgivings, happy to have regular meals and a secure residence. Moreover, because Irish women married later than other women, or not at all, they remained in the workforce for a longer period of time.¹⁰

Immigrant women who were not employed in the mills or as servants gravitated to the needle trades, working as seamstresses, dress-makers, milliners, and “tailoresses.” These were attractive occupations for women, for while they generally paid poorly, they frequently allowed a woman to work from home, a benefit for young girls and married and widowed women with children.

African American males and females in 1860s Burlington earned their living at the same low-skilled jobs as did the Irish: servants, porters, waiters, and coachmen. But, interestingly, of the fifteen barbers in town six were African American, a phenomenon also noted by historians Amani Whitfield and Elise Guyette. This was not peculiar to Burlington but part of a national pattern.¹¹ In the slave South, where white

labor was scarce, African Americans often worked as barbers. Freed blacks saw barbering as a means to build a better life. And this seems to have been true for at least some of them in Burlington. One African American barber, A. B. Beulah, had a domestic servant, a white girl named Margaret Hickory. Another black barber, H. C. Smith, had done well enough that he owned real estate valued at \$500 and personal property worth another \$500, not inconsiderable amounts in 1860.¹²

ATTITUDES TOWARD THE NEW ARRIVALS

What was the reaction of Burlington's old Yankee stock toward the Irish and French-speaking Canadians—with their different languages and strange customs? In general, they held them in low esteem. For example, in the years between 1850 and 1900, Burlington's leading newspaper, the *Burlington Free Press*, frequently included a "Pat and Mike" joke that portrayed the Irish as naïve and dimwitted. Here is a typical one from 1877: An Irishman just off the boat in New York thinks he has found his two lost brothers when he sees "patented 1870" on a boiler because his two brothers, Pat and Ted, were boilermakers.¹³ French Canadians fared no better. Rowland E. Robinson, Vermont writer and historian, who lived in Ferrisburg just down the road from Burlington, in his 1892 book, *Vermont: A Study in Independence*, commented—as he watched hordes of Canadians entering the state from Québec—that "The character of these people is not such as to inspire the highest hope for the future of Vermont."¹⁴

Not only did the Burlington establishment find Irish and French Canadians lacking, they also found them dirty and prone to disease. Dr. Samuel Thayer, the city's first health officer, reported with his nose in the air in 1865 that Irish tenement dwellers disposed of rotten vegetables in the streets outside their dwellings, where "the ground was greasy with slop water and other filth." He went on to write that in these streets "horses, cows, hogs, hens and children are mixed up, so that it is difficult to determine which is the hog pen and which is the nursery."¹⁵ In short, for this high-brow Yankee, the Irish and French Canadians lived like animals.

The Irish also had a reputation for disorderliness, almost always related to alcohol; and there was some truth to the charge. In lower court cases in Burlington between 1858 and 1870, 47 percent of the defendants were Irish, 26 percent French Canadian, 22 percent Anglos, and the remainder from other ethnic groups.¹⁶ Burlington's Third Ward, a mixed Irish and French Canadian working-class neighborhood where

drinking and fistfights were common, was known at least as early as 1880 as “the Bloody Third.”

Burlington’s Yankees particularly objected to the religion of the newcomers. Protestants themselves, they abhorred the Roman Catholicism of the Irish and the French Canadians, echoing the nativist belief of the day that the church’s autocratic structure made it inimical to democracy. Prominent Burlington resident and one-time Vermont congressman George Perkins Marsh, an opponent of slavery in pre-Civil War days, whom many consider the father of conservationism, held that “The slave driver and the priest are twin brothers.”¹⁷ The pope came in for particular scorn. Theresa Viele, a Louisiana Catholic temporarily living in Burlington in the 1850s with her soldier husband, was astonished at how Vermonters characterized the pope as “innately depraved.”¹⁸

As the ranks of Irish and French Canadians swelled in the 1860s, alarmed Yankee residents felt compelled to take action. Since they could not stem or reverse the flow of foreigners in their midst, they opted for a new tack: assimilate them by converting them to “truthful” religion. In 1867, leaders of the city’s Protestant churches agreed to form a “Union Committee” composed of two representatives from each church to develop a program to counter the influence of the Catholic Church—a church that they deemed “the mightiest system of error on the globe.” Their first effort to this end was to determine how many Catholics resided in the city. They went door to door counting and proselytizing. The instructions to canvassers directed them to “invite, or, if prudent, urge attention to the essentials of the Christian religion.” When the numbers came in, they found that 52 percent of the city’s residents professed to belong to the Church of Rome.¹⁹ In the final effort in the campaign, in 1873 they opened a “French Baptist Mission” in the city’s north side, the home of the largest concentration of French Canadian Catholics. The effectiveness of the mission is unknown. It closed in 1886, although this may have been due more to the death of Lawrence Barnes, one of the city’s richest lumber barons and a leading financial supporter of the proselytizing effort, than to any lack of conversions.

If old Americans lumped together the Irish and French Canadian “foreigners” because of their common religion, those two groups saw themselves differently. A chasm based on religious traditions, workplace competition, mutual distrust, and language separated them. The divide may have begun as early as the 1830s with Burlington’s first resi-

dent Catholic priest, a tactless Irishman named Jeremiah O'Callaghan, who held French Canadians in low esteem. Once, while lauding the philanthropy of Francis LeClair, a prosperous French Canadian businessman, O'Callaghan remarked that "Frank is a Frenchman; but unlike the rest, he is a gentleman."²⁰ Moreover, French Canadians, deeply protective of their own culture, resented the assimilationist policy of the Irish-dominated American Catholic hierarchy. In 1890 a French Canadian organization, *Ligue des Patriotes*, went so far as to meet in Fall River, Massachusetts, to discuss how to oppose a proclamation by the church leadership that "National societies as such have no place in the Catholic Church."²¹

The estrangement from O'Callaghan's church led local French Canadian Catholics to agitate for their own French-language parish. The upshot was that in 1850 the Diocese of Boston, which then included Vermont, established a second parish in Burlington, St. Joseph. St. Joseph became the first "national" parish in New England: one based on culture and language rather than geography. Eventually, O'Callaghan's St. Mary's became known as the "Irish" church, and St. Joseph's as the "French" church. In later years, each parish established its own grammar school, furthering the cultural divide; but perhaps no phenomena accentuated the Irish-French Canadian estrangement so much as the city's Catholic cemetery adjacent to Riverside Avenue and North Prospect Street: there, French Canadians were buried in one section and the Irish in another.

There was also rivalry over jobs and wages. Arriving in massive numbers beginning in the 1860s, French Canadians drove down wages; critics referred to them as the Chinese of the Eastern states.²² Owners of Vermont industries often recruited French Canadians to break strikes. To cite just one of the worst examples: In what has been styled "The Great Turnout" in West Rutland in 1868, marble quarry owners brought in rail carloads of French Canadians to replace striking Irish quarrymen, who were then *turned out* of company-owned housing.²³ No such oppressive tactics are known to have been employed in Burlington, but across the state Irishmen considered French Canadians to be workplace competitors.

There was also rivalry in the realm of politics. Having influence in city hall meant patronage jobs. Here too the Irish and French Canadians clashed. Their differences led French Canadians to identify more with the Republican Party than with the Democrats, the political home of the Irish. What seemed to rankle French Canadians was the way

Irish Democrats shut them out of positions of power. In 1900 in Ward 3—the “Bloody Third”—Peter Girard, a Republican, almost defeated popular Democratic incumbent John Shea because “the French Democrats of the ward had been promised the election of one of their number to the Board of Aldermen, but the pledge had not been fulfilled, their claim being that the Irish Democrats continued to absorb all the political prizes in the ward.”²⁴

It is significant that in 1873 the first person from a French Canadian background elected as a Burlington alderman was Adolphus Gravel, a Republican, whom the Republican *Burlington Free Press* endorsed as “a thorough young man of business, and real estate owner who has done much among our French-Canadian citizens to aid the Republican cause.”²⁵ For the Republican Party, which was courting French Canadian support, he was an ideal candidate. He was third-generation French Canadian American—both his parents had been born in Vermont—and he owned a popular grocery store on North Street, in the heart of Burlington’s heavily French Canadian Ward 2. When the votes came in, Gravel had roundly defeated his Democratic opponent 162 to 47. Political rivalry between the Irish and French Canadians continued into the early twentieth century.

In the absence of diaries and letters that might shed light on the attitudes of Burlington’s Irish and Canadians toward African Americans, comments in the city’s leading newspaper, the *Burlington Free Press*, might serve as a surrogate source. An editorial in the *Free Press* in 1869 probably expressed the sentiments of most whites in the city: “all over the world he [a black man] has to be driven to his work—all the world over he is lazy, and only exerts himself on compulsion of some sort or another.”²⁶ But perhaps more telling of discrimination against them is the fact that—as we shall see—virtually no African Americans worked in the city’s lumber yards or textile mills, workplaces dominated by unskilled Irish and French Canadians.

True, Burlington residents had been opposed to slavery in the years leading up to the war, but in the main they did not believe in racial equality. Their position was probably best exemplified by the Rev. John K. Converse, one of the city’s Congregational ministers. Before the Civil War he held that slavery should be abolished but that whites and African Americans could not live together. Blacks should be returned to Africa. For years Converse was the New England organizer for the American Colonization Society.

In contrast with this picture of the lazy black man, however, was the

esteem with which many Burlington residents held Tony Anthony. Anthony worked as a cook—perhaps chef is the more appropriate description—and enjoyed widespread acclaim for his skill. When the Mallet’s Bay House, a summer resort in nearby Colchester, advertised its culinary facilities in 1869, it proudly proclaimed that the dining room would be “under the supervision of the well-known Tony Anthony.”²⁷ Clearly, Burlingtonians’ respect for Mr. Anthony reminds us that generalizations gloss over exceptions.

1900

Through the closing decades of the nineteenth century, Canadians and Irish continued to be the largest ethnic communities in Burlington; but, in terms of size, their roles had reversed. In 1860 those born in Ireland outnumbered those born in Canada. This changed in the years following the Civil War. Sometime around 1870 Canadians surpassed the Irish in numbers. In the 1880 census natives of Canada numbered 1,655 and the Irish born, 897. The reversal reflected the difference between Canadian and Irish emigration: The great wave of Irish emigration spawned by the potato famine of the 1840s receded after 1855, while emigration from Canada to Vermont accelerated. With the 1900 census those born in Canada, 2,463, swamped the 592 hailing from the Emerald Isle.

For both Canadians and Irish the second generation, as noted in Table 1, was now larger than the first or immigrant generation. In total these two ethnic groups through two generations comprised 43 percent of Burlington’s turn-of-the-century population. If it were possible to track a third generation, the percentage would be much higher. Brian Walsh, for example, in his thesis on the Irish in Burlington, attempted to do so by counting those with Irish-sounding names in addition to those with an Irish place of birth or a parent’s place of birth, and he came up with a figure of 3,565 residents with Irish backgrounds, far above our two-generational figure of 2,407.²⁸ While Walsh’s figure may be close to the mark, we decline to follow his procedure because of its potential for error.²⁹

The next question is, how many of Burlington’s Canadians and Irish had a long history of residency in the Queen City; or put another way, what was their rate of persistence? Were their communities stable, or were they in flux, with individuals and families constantly moving in and moving out. Existing studies of rates of persistence for Burlington’s communities of Irish, Canadians, and African Americans cover

different time periods and thus are difficult to compare. Tom Jordan and Jeff Potash, looking at the decade between 1850 and 1860, found that only 8 percent of the 1850 Irish were still residents in 1860, although 43 percent of the French Canadians remained.³⁰ Betsy Beattie in her work on the period 1860 to 1870 found that 19.6 percent of the French Canadians of 1860 were still resident ten years later; while Tom Bassett concluded that nearly half the French Canadians of 1870 were still in Burlington in 1880. Whitfield found that among African Americans in turn-of-the-century Burlington, 18 percent had resided there in 1880.

In our own study of rates of persistence in the period 1880-1900, we found that for the Canadian born the rate was 8.1 percent; for those born in Ireland, 9.4 percent; and a 13 percent rate for African Americans. However, since many Irish and Canadians had been resident in Burlington since mid-century and thus would have been of an age where they were dying off in the 1880s and 1890s, these rates must be approached with caution: They may reflect mortality as much as lack of persistence. Further complicating any investigation into rates of persistence was the custom of married women taking their husband's name. Many women who lived in Burlington in 1880 still resided in the city in 1900, but some are lost in the persistence rate due to marriage. Our figures for rates of persistence must therefore be on the low side.

OCCUPATIONS — 1900

Table 4 shows the number of two-generational Canadian and Irish males in occupational categories in 1900. Table 5 shows occupations for other foreign-born males.

Some occupational trends seen in 1860 continued to the end of the century. Canadian males of the two generations, for example, still dominated the building trades in 1900, accounting for over half of city residents involved in that line of work; and almost half of all those laboring in the lumber mills and in the manufacturing of wood products—doors, window sashes, furniture, shoe lasts, and brush handles—were Canadian Americans. Where wood was involved, the Canadians held sway, although anecdotal evidence suggests that through 1870 the Irish were more numerous in the lumber yards.

Canadians and Irish also continued to form a majority of the city's laborers, although with a significant difference from the situation in 1860. In that year the immigrant generation of Irish and Canadians alone accounted for 79 percent of the laboring force; in 1900 it was only 32 percent. Part of this drop is explained by the decreased number of

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| Table 4: Occupations, Ethnic Males, 1900—Part One | | | | | |
|--|-------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | MALES | | | | |
| Occupational Category | City | Canada | | Ireland | |
| | Total | First | Second | First | Second |
| | Males | Generation | Generation | Generation | Generation |
| Manufacturing | | | | | |
| Lumber Mills | 262 | 52 | 38 | 14 | 59 |
| Wood Products Manuf. | 202 | 59 | 42 | 2 | 21 |
| Textile Mills | 297 | 131 | 60 | 3 | 2 |
| Other Manufacturing | 209 | 31 | 22 | 6 | 19 |
| Elementary Occupations | | | | | |
| Servants, Laundry, etc. | 88 | 9 | 9 | 3 | 10 |
| Laborer, Day Laborer | 690 | 170 | 136 | 58 | 79 |
| Crafts & Related Trades | | | | | |
| Needle Trades | 50 | 10 | 3 | 2 | - |
| Building Trades | 569 | 140 | 87 | 11 | 47 |
| Artisans & Other Trades | 463 | 98 | 70 | 17 | 53 |
| Sales & Service | | | | | |
| Merchants | 243 | 17 | 18 | 10 | 21 |
| Peddlers | 78 | 11 | 11 | 1 | - |
| Telegraph, Steno, etc. | 66 | | 4 | - | 4 |
| Other Sales & Service | 903 | 82 | 73 | 13 | 82 |
| Transportation | | | | | |
| Railroads | 201 | 7 | 6 | 9 | 35 |
| Boats | 57 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 5 |
| Horse Powered/Other | 330 | 34 | 45 | 13 | 47 |
| Educated Professions | | | | | |
| Doctors, Dentists | 83 | 20 | 1 | - | 3 |
| Nurses | 7 | - | 3 | - | - |
| Teachers | 51 | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| Lawyers | 40 | - | | | 2 |
| College Students | 280 | 9 | 13 | 2 | 12 |
| Other Educated | 81 | 1 | 1 | - | 3 |
| Farming & Quarrying | 238 | 45 | 33 | 19 | 21 |
| Column Total | 5,488 | 936 | 683 | 188 | 526 |

| First & Second Generation | MALES | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|--------|-------|-------|---------------|
| Occupational Category | England | Germany | Russia | Italy | Syria | Other Foreign |
| Manufacturing | | | | | | |
| Lumber Mills | 4 | 4 | | | | |
| Wood Products Manuf. | | 3 | | | | |
| Textile Mills | 3 | 2 | | | | 1 |
| Other Manufacturing | 1 | 4 | | | | 6 |
| Elementary Occupations | | | | | | |
| Servants, Laundry, etc. | 6 | | | | | 1 |
| Laborer, Day Laborer | 10 | 17 | 2 | 21 | 3 | 8 |
| Crafts & Related Trades | | | | | | |
| Needle Trades | 1 | 5 | 7 | | | 5 |
| Building Trades | 2 | 11 | | | | 6 |
| Artisans & Other Trades | 12 | 6 | 3 | | | 4 |
| Sales & Service | | | | | | |
| Merchants | 3 | 10 | 17 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Peddlers | - | 12 | 27 | 1 | 5 | 0 |
| Telegraph, Steno, etc. | 1 | - | - | - | - | 1 |
| Other Sales & Service | 9 | 6 | 12 | 3 | - | 4 |
| Transportation | | | | | | |
| Railroads | 6 | | | 42 | | 2 |
| Boats | 1 | | | | | 2 |
| Horse Powered/Other | 3 | 2 | | | | 4 |
| Educated Professions | | | | | | 5 |
| Doctors, Dentists | 2 | 2 | | | | 1 |
| Nurses | | | | | | |
| Teachers | 5 | 2 | 2 | | | 4 |
| Lawyers | | 1 | | | | |
| College Students | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| Other Educated | | | 2 | | | 2 |
| Farming & Quarrying | 5 | 7 | | | | 7 |
| Column Total | 75 | 94 | 73 | 69 | 10 | 68 |

Irish immigrants in the city, but part of it is due to the greater work options available. Still, 62 percent of those who in 1900 described themselves as laborers came from the two-generational Irish and Canadian communities.

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Irish involvement in railroading showed a significant change from 1860. In that year fully 47 percent of Burlington's railroad men were immigrant Irish, and almost all of them toiled at laboring work: blasting road beds, building culverts and bridges, and laying ties and rails. Forty years later, first- and second-generation Irish Americans combined constituted only 22 percent of the city's railroad men; while a few continued to perform laboring tasks, many men of the second generation now

| Occupational Category | FEMALES | | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| | City | Canada | | Ireland | |
| | Total Females | First Generation | Second Generation | First Generation | Second Generation |
| Manufacturing | | | | | |
| Lumber Mills & Manuf. | 5 | 1 | | 1 | |
| Textile Mills | 284 | 111 | 62 | | 8 |
| Other Manufacturing | 118 | 2 | 15 | 2 | 28 |
| Elementary Occupations | | | | | |
| Servants, Laundry, etc. | 768 | 81 | 87 | 67 | 165 |
| Laborer, Day Laborer | 62 | 10 | 13 | 2 | 8 |
| Crafts & Related Trades | | | | | |
| Needle Trades | 307 | 40 | 42 | 8 | 71 |
| Building Trades | 1 | 1 | | | |
| Artisans & Other Trades | 27 | 1 | 7 | | 4 |
| Sales & Service | | | | | |
| Merchants | 8 | - | - | 1 | 2 |
| Peddlers | 10 | - | 1 | - | - |
| Telegraph, Steno, etc. | 90 | 3 | 4 | - | 16 |
| Other Sales & Service | 329 | 24 | 36 | 4 | 42 |
| Transportation | 4 | | 1 | | 1 |
| Educated Professions | | | | | |
| Doctors, Dentists | 3 | - | - | - | - |
| Nurses | 73 | 15 | 7 | 1 | 6 |
| Teachers | 161 | 13 | 11 | 13 | 19 |
| Lawyers | 1 | - | - | - | - |
| College Students | 50 | 4 | 2 | - | 2 |
| Other Educated | 12 | 3 | 5 | | - |
| Farming & Quarrying | 3 | | 1 | | |
| Column Total | 2,316 | 309 | 294 | 99 | 372 |

.....

| First and Second Generations Occupational Category | FEMALES | | | | | |
|---|---------|---------|--------|-------|-------|---------------|
| | England | Germany | Russia | Italy | Syria | Other Foreign |
| Manufacturing | | | | | | |
| Textile Mills | 2 | | | | | 1 |
| Other Manufacturing | 1 | | | | | |
| Elementary Occupations | | | | | | |
| Servants, Laundry, etc. | 7 | 14 | 2 | | 1 | 5 |
| Laborer, Day Laborer | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| Crafts & Related Trades | | | | | | |
| Needle Trades | 2 | | | | | 2 |
| Artisans & Other Trades | | | | | | 1 |
| Sales & Service | | | | | | |
| Merchants | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Peddlers | - | - | - | - | 9 | - |
| Telegraph, Steno, etc. | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Other Sales & Service | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - | 2 |
| Transportation | 1 | | | | | |
| Educated Professions | | | | | | |
| Doctors, Dentists | | | | | | |
| Nurses | 4 | | | | | 3 |
| Teachers | 3 | 2 | | | | 6 |
| Lawyers | | | | | | |
| College Students | | | | | | |
| Other Educated | | | | | | |
| Column Total | 22 | 19 | 4 | - | 10 | 21 |

had stepped up to be engineers, conductors, ticket agents, and station masters. Unskilled work fell to a new generation of immigrants.

The 1900 census, unlike that of 1860, gives us a clearer picture of who worked in the textile mills. While the tendency of those who have studied mill workers has been to emphasize the female “operatives,” the mills also employed hundreds of men in various capacities: loading and unloading wagons and boxcars, opening cotton or wool bales, and dying fabric—doing the heavy lifting required in getting out fabric. It was Canadians who did this work: 64 percent of male mill workers living in Burlington were first- or second-generation Canadian Americans. The same was true of the female workforce. Sixty-one percent of Burlington women who labored at looms and spinning jennies came from the two-

generational Canadian community. The Irish were almost totally absent. For reasons we can only speculate about—Canadian hostility, language differences, preferences for other work—few Burlington Irish Americans worked in the textile mills.

Though the principal occupation of Irish American women continued to be domestic service, just as it had been in 1860, other employment opportunities had opened for them and for all women in the closing decades of the nineteenth century: as office help, sales clerks, typists, and stenographers. With a plethora of public and private schools in town, plus a university, a medical college, a business college, and a hospital, there was work for teachers and nurses.³¹ There were 161 female teachers in the Burlington census, 24 of them two-generational Canadians and another 32 two-generational Irish. Interestingly, 27 of those from Irish or Canadian backgrounds were nuns in teaching orders.

The needle trades continued to attract Irish and Canadian women. A little over half of all women employed this way came from the two generations of these two groups. The numbers for the Canadians and the Irish were about the same: 82 from the two-generational Canadians and 79 from the Irish. Where there was a surprising difference is within the Irish figure: only 8 were first generation while 71 were second generation. Of course, the low figure for the Irish born is a reflection of the general decrease in Irish immigration. However, that so many of the second generation labored in this field is surprising, particularly compared to the U.S.-born daughters of Canadians. Despite the much larger Canadian population, the latter numbered only 42.

| Occupational Category | Black/Mulatto | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|--------|-------|
| | Male | Female | Total |
| Barber | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| Railroad | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Coachman | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| Nurse | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Florist | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Boarding House Keeper | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Servant, etc. | 6 | 8 | 14 |
| Bootblack | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| Laborer, etc. | 6 | 1 | 7 |
| Total | 30 | 11 | 41 |

The condition of African Americans, male and female, remained much as it had been in 1860. Most were still employed in menial occupations. Barbering continued to attract black males as it had forty years before. Gilbert Farmer, 28, described himself as a florist—and, on first blush, we thought we had come across our first black merchant—but how his business could have thrived is a mystery: He gave his current status as “prisoner” and his home as the city jail. A telling point that has already been mentioned about black occupations is that no African Americans worked in the textile mills or in the lumber yards, two industries that employed unskilled labor but which were dominated by white ethnic workers. One can only conclude that African Americans were either consciously excluded from these industries or themselves declined to enter them.

Before leaving the subject of black employment, we must again return to Almon Clark, who we noted earlier had two children and was married to a white Irish woman. Nonetheless, the whole Clark family was described as “Colored.” Under occupation Clark described himself in 1900 as a boarding-house keeper. Herein may lie an interesting historical connection. The boarding house was Converse Hall, a stately men’s dormitory on the University of Vermont campus, built in 1895 and named for the man who commissioned it, railroad magnate John H. Converse, class of 1861. That the first manager of the house was a black man possibly is related to the fact that Converse’s father, the Rev. John K. Converse, was the abolitionist mentioned earlier in this article. Could it be that as a condition of the Converse gift to UVM there was a stipulation, or at least a hope, that it employ African Americans?

THE NEW IMMIGRANTS

In 1900 there are new immigrants in the Queen City—Germans, Jews, Italians, and Lebanese. But before turning to them it might be useful to assess the place of the Irish and Canadians in Burlington society. In this turn-of-the-century year there were Canadians and Irish who had roots in Burlington that went back 50 or 60 years; and members of the second and third generations probably considered themselves more American than Irish or Canadian. Moreover, many French Canadians and Irish—unlike the second great wave of immigrants to the U.S. that began in the 1880s—had fought in one of America’s defining political upheavals, the Civil War. This gave them special claim to being Americans, even if that claim was sometimes only grudgingly recognized. At Decoration Day ceremonies there were Kellys and Lafountains, Caseys and Gagnons, who proudly wore GAR ribbons.³²

There were numerous signs of Irish and Canadian success in Burlington. Catholics of each community had their own churches and schools (with almost as many students as the public schools), and the bishop of the Diocese of Burlington, John Stephen Michaud, was a native son, born of an Irish mother and French Canadian father. Québec-born Jerome Dumas had served eight years as the city's chief of police (1889-1897), and he was followed in 1903 by second-generation Irish American Patrick J. Russell, who would be the city's longest serving police chief (1903-1931). Almost yearly since the 1870s, Wards 2 and 3 sent Irish and French Canadians to represent them on the board of aldermen. Civil War veteran James B. Scully maintained a home on genteel South Union Street but lived most of the year in Washington, D.C., where he was the doorkeeper for the U.S. House of Representatives. James Edmund Burke, as mentioned earlier, in 1903 became the first ethnic mayor of the city. And John J. Flynn, a second-generation Irish American, was one of Burlington's richest men, owning extensive real estate in the city and trolley lines in a number of Vermont cities, including Burlington, and was the founder of a bank.

These Canadian and Irish Americans probably never received invitations to the Yankee mansions on Burlington's exclusive hill district, but they were justifiably proud of all they and their parents had achieved in the city. When Alderman Shea proclaimed in 1904 that three-fifths of the city's residents were of Irish descent, the implication was that Burlington was an Irish city—that in a political sense, they owned it.

French Canadians probably looked askance at this claim—and this might form part of the basis for their hostility to the Irish—for they had a claim of their own. Researcher Elin Anderson, writing in the 1930s, observed that to French Canadians, “Burlington is a French city and they are its true citizens.”³³ They based their claim on more than just numbers. It was grounded in history. Frenchman Samuel de Champlain was the first European to explore the region and for over a hundred years northern Vermont was a part of New France.

As Americans, the Irish and the Canadians watched—possibly with the suspicious eyes of insiders—the new immigrants moving into their city. The most numerous were the Jews (see Table 1). From early in the nineteenth century there had been a few German Jews in Burlington. Bernard Heineberg, a physician, had established himself in the lakeside town in the 1830s, followed by the Turk brothers, Louis and Bennet, who were involved in the dry goods business as early as 1849. Besides the Turk brothers and Dr. Heineberg, the 1860 census also listed Abram and Morris Platt as coming from Germany. But this handful of German Jews were hardly the precursors of what was to come.

In 1881, following the assassination of Czar Alexander II, a series of pogroms broke out in Russian-controlled Poland and Lithuania, sending thousands of Jews fleeing from their small rural villages—*shtetls*—to the United States, where they were joined by Jews emigrating from Prussian-controlled Poland. By the early 1880s, Russian and Polish Jews began arriving in Burlington. In the 1900 census there were 184 Russian-born Jews in Burlington and another 102 American-born children of Russian Jewish mothers. In addition, there were 64 German-born Jews, making the Jews the third largest ethnic group in the city after the Canadians and Irish.³⁴

Occupationally, Burlington's Jews worked almost exclusively in trade. Table 5 points out the large number of Russian and German Jewish peddlers in the city, 50 percent of the total. Within the "Sales and Service" category there were 10 Jews who were sales clerks (often in family-owned shops), bookkeepers, and wholesalers. There were also—only a dozen or so years after arriving in Burlington—17 Jews who had graduated from being back-packing peddlers to being merchants. They owned grocery stores and dry goods shops, mainly along North Street, the principal shopping district for the city's blue-collar workers. A few, like partners Robert Kamber and Joseph Frank, had become prosperous enough to open their business—the American Clothing Company—on Church Street, the city's premier retail address. Tellingly, only two Russian Jews described themselves as laborers and none worked in the lumber yards or the textile mills, the two industries that had previously provided entry-level jobs for newcomers. The rest were a smattering of tinsmiths and artisans.

In the 1900 census, only 4 Russian-born Jewish women worked outside the home. Two were in retail: 18-year-old Rachel Marcus worked as a sales person in her family's shop; and Rose Melvich, a 34-year-old widow with a 15-year-old son, owned a dry goods store on Intervale Avenue. Two other women, both of whom appear to have been single but living with relatives, described their occupation as "housework," by which could be meant either that they earned their keep by working within their relatives' home or that they went out daily to clean in other people's homes. The important point is that, unlike other immigrant women, the Jews refrained from domestic service.

How did Burlington's Yankees, French Canadians, and Irish, themselves generally religious Christians, react to the Jews as non-Christian immigrants? Generally, except for business, there was little interaction between Jews and the broader society. The Jews existed as a community apart, creating their own enclave in the city. As early as 1900 the *Burl-*

ington Free Press reported that the city had a “clearly defined Jewish colony.”³⁵ It became known as “Little Jerusalem.” Perhaps more telling of Jewish separateness was the experience of a group of Jewish men who desired to join the Knights of Pythias, a secret fraternal society much like the Masonic order. They were chartered as a separate chapter when a chapter already existed in the city. This seems to be a case of both inclusion *and* exclusion.

Prejudice against the Jews was sometimes intense. In the Vermont-produced PBS film *Little Jerusalem*, older Jewish residents remembered having to be prepared to defend themselves when leaving their neighborhood’s Hebrew Free School (founded 1902).³⁶ One incident from the early 1900s says much about community attitudes. Around 1910 the Rosenthal family had become sufficiently prosperous that it purchased a house on the corner of Loomis and North Willard Streets, then a solidly middle-class neighborhood outside Little Jerusalem. When a neighboring homeowner learned of the sale he approached the Rosentals and offered to purchase their new home from them at a profit, stating, “we don’t want your kind here.”³⁷ There is no mistaking the hostility behind that comment.

But there is also evidence of empathy and even respectful friendship. Through the 1890s Burlington newspapers reported critically on the violence against Jews in Russia. One article likened their treatment to the way the British had historically treated the Irish, a comparison that must have elicited sympathy in many Burlington homes. Fr. Jerome Cloarec, the French-born pastor of St. Joseph and a student of early rabbinical writings, enjoyed evening discussions with local Jewish scholars of the *Talmud*.³⁸ In 1891 Burlington’s Catholic bishop, French-born Louis de Goesbriand, published *The History of the Worship of God*, in which he paid tribute to the Jewish origins of many Catholic rites and rituals.³⁹ And until the Jewish community began producing its own physicians in the opening years of the twentieth century, popular Patrick McSweeney, the son of Irish emigrants, administered to their medical needs.

Just as Burlington’s Jewish population was growing in the 1880s, another group of foreigners appeared on the city’s streets: Germans. Their arrival in Burlington at this time appears to be related to the introduction of discriminatory policies against Catholics in Bismarck’s Germany—many of the new arrivals were Catholics—and to the widespread opportunities offered by the Queen City’s prosperous economy. By 1900 there were 110 non-Jewish Germans and 12 Austrians in the city.

In terms of occupations, the Germans appear to have prospered in the few years they had been in Burlington. Of 64 males born in Germany whose occupations the census listed, only 14 (22 percent) described themselves as laborers, two worked in textile mills, and only one toiled in the lumber yards. Most men had a marketable skill, either in the building trades or other skilled occupations: furriers, tailors, coopers, butchers, shoemakers, blacksmiths, and cigar makers. Four had their own farms. A few held jobs in manufacturing making refrigerators, boxes, and patented medicine. One, Oskar Heining, was the foreman of the city's water department. The remainder were an assortment of salesmen, solicitors, clerks, and sign painters. Where they were absent was in the professional and merchant classes. There were no male teachers among them (the two German teachers in Table 5 were Jews), although there was one physician, and only one person listed himself as a merchant. The picture that forms is of skilled craftsmen, not men of commerce.

German-born married women—like most other married women at the time—rarely worked outside the home. In 1900 there were 34 married German females in the city, but only Augusta Casparsor, 54, listed an occupation. She did housework by the day. Interestingly, though married, she seems to have lived alone, perhaps an abandoned woman with a husband living elsewhere. In reality, if not in law, she was a single woman. Almost all single women worked. There were 15 German-born single women aged 14 and above in 1900, and 12 of them held jobs, all of them of the menial, service-type occupations. Their situation was similar to that of Irish women.

Another Burlington ethnic group that, at least occupationally for the men, followed the same path as the Jews, was the Lebanese Syrians. They began settling in the Queen City in the late 1890s and in 1900 numbered 41 residents. Like the Jews, the Lebanese gravitated to commerce: as peddlers, fruit dealers, and merchants. That so many were involved in trade—as anthropologist Amy Rowe has shown—resulted from the circumstances in which they found themselves upon their first arrival in New York. There, Lebanese American businessmen often recruited the newcomers to be peddlers, offering to advance them goods on credit and advising them on sales territories—such as the Burlington area—that were well connected via the railroad to sources of resupply in New York.⁴⁰

While there was a tendency for Lebanese women to remain at home once married, they took on outside jobs in greater numbers than other married immigrant women. For example, of the thirteen married Leba-

nese women in the census, six worked outside the home: five of them as peddlers and one as a laundress. In at least two instances, both a husband and a wife described themselves as peddlers, suggesting a family enterprise. Whether both went out on the road separately or simply took turns tending a cart or a stand is unknown. We also found two single women and two widows working as peddlers. Overall, of the ten Lebanese women, married, single, and widowed, who worked outside the home, nine toiled as peddlers.

Assessing their reception in Burlington is difficult because given their small numbers in 1900, their presence was almost invisible. And, because it is in the nature of the print media to publish more sensational stories, the few notices of Lebanese Syrians found in Burlington newspapers tended to emphasize negative behavior. One account published in the *Free Press* in 1897 reported that an 11-year-old Syrian “girl tramp” who lived on Cherry Street had been found with stolen goods.⁴¹ And just before the turn of the century, Bosil Noah’s name frequently appeared in a number of court cases: one involving the illegal sale of alcohol, another the possession of stolen goods, and another of adultery.⁴²

But not all reports reflected negatively on the Lebanese. Because they were Maronite Catholics in communion with the Roman church they probably found more acceptance among their French Canadian and Irish neighbors than did the Jews. As early as 1897, St. Joseph Church and St. Mary’s Cathedral each were the venues of Lebanese weddings. And local Roman Catholics probably applauded in 1900 when a Maronite priest visited Burlington as part of a mission to Maronite Catholics in America.

There also seems to have been some fascination with Lebanese culture. This is not surprising, given that the Lebanese came from a part of the world from which Americans had had little contact. Curiosity led the Burlington YMCA in October, 1899, to invite Solomon Thomas to speak on the customs of “this interesting people.”⁴³ There was an appreciation of Lebanese crafts. The Old Bee Hive, one of the city’s high-end department stores, advertised that it had a stock of Syrian rugs for sale, the value of which was attested by Demetrius Nour, a native of that country.⁴⁴

Simultaneously with the arrival of the Lebanese was the appearance on the city’s streets of people from Italy. Italians had been settling in Vermont since the 1880s—primarily in the marble-quarrying towns of Rutland County and in the granite-producing region of Barre—but it was not until the 1890s that they made their appearance in Burlington.

In the census year of 1900 there were 86 native-born sons and daughters of Italy in the city. Although, as we shall see, at least 42 of them were transients, members of a work crew hired by out-of-state contractors to construct a rail line; when their work was completed they left for other job sites. Only the 44 not involved in railroad construction could be described as residents, and most of them, unlike the northern Italians associated with Vermont's extractive industries, appear to have come from southern Italy, particularly the region around Naples.⁴⁵

What is clear is that Burlington's Italians of 1900 had taken the place of the Irish of 1860: They were the new navvys. Of the 71 male Italians in the city whose work is described in the census, 42 were in the railroad gang previously mentioned and another 21 described themselves as laborers. Clearly it was manual labor and particularly railroad work that brought Italians to Burlington. At the time the census was being taken the Rutland and Canadian Railroad was constructing a line to run through the Champlain Islands, connecting Burlington to Canada. The previously mentioned crew of 42 Italians in Burlington resided in make-shift quarters along a rail line adjacent to Institute Road, approximately where Burlington High School now stands.⁴⁶

Across the region as the nineteenth turned into the twentieth century, Italian work gangs provided the manual labor for a variety of projects: a 100-man crew in South Burlington was busy building a roadbed for a rail line connecting Burlington to Hinesburg; another 52 Italians toiled at laying water pipes for the village of Essex Junction; and another gang put down track for the Rutland-Canadian Line in North Hero. These crews were exclusively Italian. There was not an Irishman or French Canadian among them.⁴⁷

Almost predictably — given Italy's reputation for cuisine — the eight Italians who were neither laborers nor railroad men in the Queen City earned their living in the food industry: five as fruit sellers, two as bakers, and one as a grocer. And, just as with the African Americans, Jews, and Lebanese, they were totally absent in the lumber yards and in the textile mills.

Almost totally absent too were Italian women, both in Burlington in general and in the workplace. Of the 44 Italians settled in Burlington, only 13 were women; and, like Jewish women, none of them worked outside the home. Perhaps as a window into the family life of these recent arrivals in America, it is interesting to note that 18 of the 42 men who worked in the railroad gang on Institute Road were married but their wives resided elsewhere, probably in Massachusetts where *padrones* often recruited these crews, but also possibly back in Italy, awaiting the return of money provided by their husbands for passage to America.

Their low work status suggest that the Italians clung to the bottom rung of Burlington's socioeconomic ladder. Their ethnic neighbors probably looked down on them, as did American society in general. The *Burlington Free Press* referred to them as "dagos." The same paper in 1891 reprinted a *New York Herald Tribune* fictive story about an overly aggressive Italian street vendor trying to coerce a young boy into buying a worthless trinket. When the boy's father saw what was happening he punched the "dago" peddler and then sneered, "Pull your knife now, for of course you have one."⁴⁸ In American eyes, Italians were dirty fighters, unfairly resorting to knives in confrontations. Writing of Burlington in the 1930s researcher Elin Anderson commented that, "In the minds of many [Burlington] citizens the Greeks, Syrians and Italians are lumped together as a very doubtful element, with question in the minds of some [sic] as to whether even to consider them white."⁴⁹

Among the city's old Yankees there was an additional concern: The growing Italian population might weaken Republican political clout and bolster that of the Democrats. One local GOP man went so far as to suggest that the party should maintain a checklist for caucuses, "so that Republicans of the city can vote without being trampled on by Winooskians, Dagos and repeaters."⁵⁰ The bias against Italians is clear. The reference to "Winooskians" was a slam at nearby Winooski's large French Canadian population.

The fears of the GOP man were well founded. In the first decade of the twentieth century, a flood of immigrants was arriving in Burlington—additional links in the chain that had first been forged in the latter half of the nineteenth century: Italians, Russian and Polish Jews, Lebanese, and Greeks, but also a smattering of peoples from other corners of Europe; and always, *always*, French-speaking Canadians from Québec. In absolute numbers the foreign-born population of Burlington peaked at 3,938 in 1910, which was then 19 percent of the city total. This was not as high as the 43 percent recorded in a much smaller Burlington in 1870. Still, with all these new peoples, Burlington—and a number of other Green Mountain cities and towns—had become and was becoming less and less like Republican and Protestant Vermont.

But, aside from the first and second generation of ethnics in Burlington in 1900, what of the third and even fourth generation of hyphenated Americans? Here we can provide no hard numbers, but Elin Anderson, living and researching in Burlington in the 1930s, estimated that 66 percent of the city's residents came from non-Yankee stock, although how she arrived at this figure is unclear.

And what of Alderman Shea's three-fifths claim for the Irish in 1900

that inspired this query? He said his information came from the census of 1900, but the census questionnaire of that year did not ask for a person's ancestry, only one's place of birth and parents' place of birth. On the other hand, Shea could have followed Brian Walsh's method and included in the count all those with Irish-sounding names. But even using that procedure the Irish American total—as Walsh found—would only have been 19 percent, a far cry from Shea's 60 percent. One is left to conclude that Shea's statement was nothing more than celebratory hyperbole. Though Shea got the numbers wrong, the mosaic of ethnic Burlington that we traced, Irish and beyond, confirms at least Shea's impulse—something to celebrate.

NOTES

¹ Elin Anderson, a sociologist at the University of Vermont, in her book *We Americans: A Study of Cleavage in an American City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), was the first to study and report on Burlington's ethnic diversity, but she confined her findings to trends and attitudes of the 1930s. Her work was followed by T. D. S. Bassett, "Urban Penetration of Rural Vermont," (2 vols., Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, typescript, 1952), which devoted a chapter to Burlington, but it simply mentioned the presence of Irish and French Canadians in the city without going into details. This work later formed the basis for Bassett's book, *The Growing Edge: Vermont Villages, 1840-1880*, (Montpelier: Vermont Historical Society, 1992). Betsy Beattie detailed French Canadian life in the Burlington area in "Emigres and Industrialization: French Canadians and Burlington, 1850-1870," a University of Vermont master's thesis, 1989, and then in three articles that resulted from it: "Opportunity Across the Border: The Burlington Area Economy and the French Canadian Worker in 1850," *Vermont History* 55 (1987): 133-152; "Community Building in Uncertain Times: The French Canadians of Burlington and Colchester, 1850-1860," *Vermont History* 57 (Spring 1989): 84-102; and "Migrants and Millworkers: The French Canadian Population of Burlington and Colchester, 1860-1870," *Vermont History* 60 (Spring 1992): 95-117. Beattie's work has provided much information on Burlington's French Canadian community but it is limited to the middle years of the nineteenth century. Brian Walsh's 1993 University of Vermont master's thesis, "Dreams Realized: Irish Americans and Progress, Burlington, Vermont, 1830-1910," does an excellent job of exploring Burlington's one-time large Irish American population. Burlington's Jews have been well documented in a book, a thesis, and a DVD. The book is Myron Samuelson, *History of the Jewish Community of Burlington, Vermont* (Burlington, VT: Myron Samuelson, 1976), and the thesis is Alan Bercovitz, "Neighborhood and Community: A Social History of the Jewish Community of Burlington," UVM, 1994. The film is *Little Jerusalem* (Prod. Dorothy Dickie, Vermont Public Television, 2012). Harvey Amani Whitfield has shed light on Burlington's small black community in the final decades of the nineteenth century in "African Americans in Burlington, Vermont, 1880-1900," *Vermont History* 75 (Summer/Fall 2007): 101-123; see also, Elise Guyette, "Working Lives of African Americans, Census of Literature 1790-1870," *Vermont History* 61 (1993): 69-84. Amy E. Rowe in "A Trace of Arabic in Granite: Lebanese Migration to the Green Mountains, 1890-1940," *Vermont History* 76 (Summer/Fall, 2008): 91-129, tells of the coming of Lebanese to the Green Mountain State. Mari Tomasi, "The Italian Story in Vermont," *Vermont History* 37 (January 1960): 73-87, is a useful introduction to the history of Vermont's Italians, particularly those of the Barre area, but has little to say about them in Burlington.

² Part of our enthusiasm in taking on this project stemmed from the research tools available to us. Work of this nature relies heavily on data from the U.S. census. Until not too long ago, researchers mining the census records had to collect information line by line from copies of the original sheets used by the census takers: a laborious and daunting undertaking when thousands of entries are involved. Thanks to computers, we simplified the task by scanning the pages of the manuscript schedules for the 1860, 1880, and 1900 censuses, and then transferred the data to Excel spreadsheets. In this way, for example, with the press of a button we could tabulate the number of Burlington residents who described themselves as laborers. Armed with these tools we were ready to proceed.

³ Except when tabulating the foreign born, we have not included English- or Scottish-born persons in our survey, as we did not see them as a people apart from the old American inhabitants of

the city. In culture and religion they were the latest version of Burlington's British American settlers and easily assimilated into American society.

⁴ Abby Maria Hemenway, *Vermont Gazetteer*, vol. 1 (Burlington, VT: A. M. Hemenway, 1868), 519.

⁵ André Sénécal, formerly of the University of Vermont's Canadian Studies Program, has argued against using the term French Canadian at all. He suggests that Québécois-Canadian more accurately describes French speakers from Canada. See André Sénécal, "Studies on Vermont/Québec Relations: The State of the Art," in *Occasional Paper Number Six: The French in Vermont: Some Current Views* (Burlington: Center for Research on Vermont, 1983), 27-37.

⁶ Beattie, "Opportunity," 135.

⁷ Cited in Bassett, "Urban Penetration in Rural Vermont," 1: 302.

⁸ There has been considerable discussion in the literature that early censuses missed a substantial number of women market workers. Many married women were listed simply as "keeping house," and while true, this was not the complete story. Often they worked seasonally outside the home, or the enumerator simply failed to ask about outside work. See Susan B. Carter, "Labor Force," in Susan B. Carter, Scott S. Gardner, Michael Haines, et al., eds., *Historical Statistics of the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁹ For attitudes of American women toward servant work see Hasia Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 80-81. For Canadian attitudes see Carl Sager, "The Transformation of the Canadian Domestic Servant, 1871-1931," *Social Science History* 31 (Winter 2007): 509-537.

¹⁰ Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America*, 43-69.

¹¹ See Walter Bristol, *Knights of the Razor* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), and Sean Trainor, "The Racially Fought History of the American Beard," *The Atlantic*, January 20, 2014, accessed 2/19/18, the atlantic.com/national/archive/2014/01/the-racially-fought-history-of-the-american-beard/283180/.

¹² U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule, *Sixth Census, 1860*.

¹³ *Burlington Free Press*, 24 January 1877.

¹⁴ Rowland E. Robinson, *Vermont: A Study in Independence* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1892), 331.

¹⁵ Dr. Samuel Thayer, "Health Report," *Annual Report of the City of Burlington, 1866* (Burlington, VT: 1866), 79-100.

¹⁶ Michel J. Martin, "'A Class of Persons Whose Presence Is a Constant Danger': Progress, Prohibition, and Public Disorderliness in Burlington, 1860-1880," *Vermont History* 62 (Summer 1994): 153.

¹⁷ Quoted in David Lowenthal, *George Perkins Marsh: Prophet of Conservation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 236.

¹⁸ Teresa Viele, *Following the Drum: A Glimpse of Frontier Life* (New York: Rudd and Carleton, 1858), 30.

¹⁹ Edward Hungerford, "A Report on the Moral and Religious Condition of the Community: Being an Address Before a Union of Evangelical Churches in the City of Burlington, Vermont, Delivered in the White Street Congregational Church, March 10, 1867" (Burlington, VT: Free Press Steam Print, 1867), 14.

²⁰ Quoted in Beattie, "Community Building," 86.

²¹ *Burlington Free Press*, 11 September 1877.

²² See Gerard J. Brault, *The French-Canadian Heritage in New England* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1986), 67-68.

²³ Rev. Patrick C. Hannan, "A History of St. Patrick's Parish," typescript, n.d. (1939?), 7A. See also Vincent Feeney, *Finnigans, Slaters, and Stonepeppers: A History of the Irish in Vermont* (Bennington, VT: Images from the Past, 2009), 111.

²⁴ *Burlington Free Press*, 7 March 1900.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3 March 1873.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 25 June 1869.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 23 August 1869.

²⁸ Walsh, "Dreams Realized," 80.

²⁹ When is the surname Brown, Smith, Clark, or Montague Irish and when is it English? In Westford, Vermont, locals when hearing the name King will often ask if it is a French King (Leroy) or an Irish King. The very French surname Lavalley is also a fairly common Irish name.

³⁰ Thomas H. Jordan and P. Jeffrey Potash, "The Unended Journey: Burlington's Irish, 1840-1870," *Chittenden County Historical Society Bulletin* 22 (Fall 1987): 3.

³¹ We also included music teachers and university students in the professional category.

³² Dorothy Canfield Fisher, who settled in Vermont in the early 1900s and who knew many Vermonters of the Civil War generation, mentioned in her book *Vermont Tradition* that it was hard for

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Vermonters to view the Irish who had served in the war as anything but Americans. See *Vermont Tradition*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953), 305.

³³ Anderson, *We Americans*, 26.

³⁴ To determine who was a German Jew rather than an ethnic German, we relied first on comparing the names of Jews associated with more recent Burlington history: names like Colodney, Agel, Grossman, and Perelman. Other names, like Rosenberg, Cohen, and Bloom, we assumed to be Jewish because individuals with these names lived in Burlington's Jewish neighborhood rather than in the German section.

³⁵ *Burlington Free Press*, 25 January 1900.

³⁶ *Little Jerusalem*.

³⁷ Bercovitz, "Neighborhood and Community," 86.

³⁸ Samuelson, *History of the Jewish Community*, 72.

³⁹ Louis de Goesbriand, *The History of the Worship of God* (Burlington, VT: Free Press, 1891).

⁴⁰ Rowe, "A Trace of Arabic," 91-129.

⁴¹ *Burlington Free Press*, 20 September 1897.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 16 January 1899, 15 January 1900, 17 September 1900.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 3 October 1899.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 10 December 1900.

⁴⁵ Tomasi, "The Italian Story in Vermont," 73-87.

⁴⁶ The address of this work gang was listed as Institute Road in the U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule, *Twelfth Census, 1900*.

⁴⁷ *Burlington Free Press*, 4 November 1898, 10 May 1900, 9 November 1899.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 17 July 1891.

⁴⁹ Anderson, *We Americans*, 63.

⁵⁰ *Burlington Free Press*, 30 July 1900.