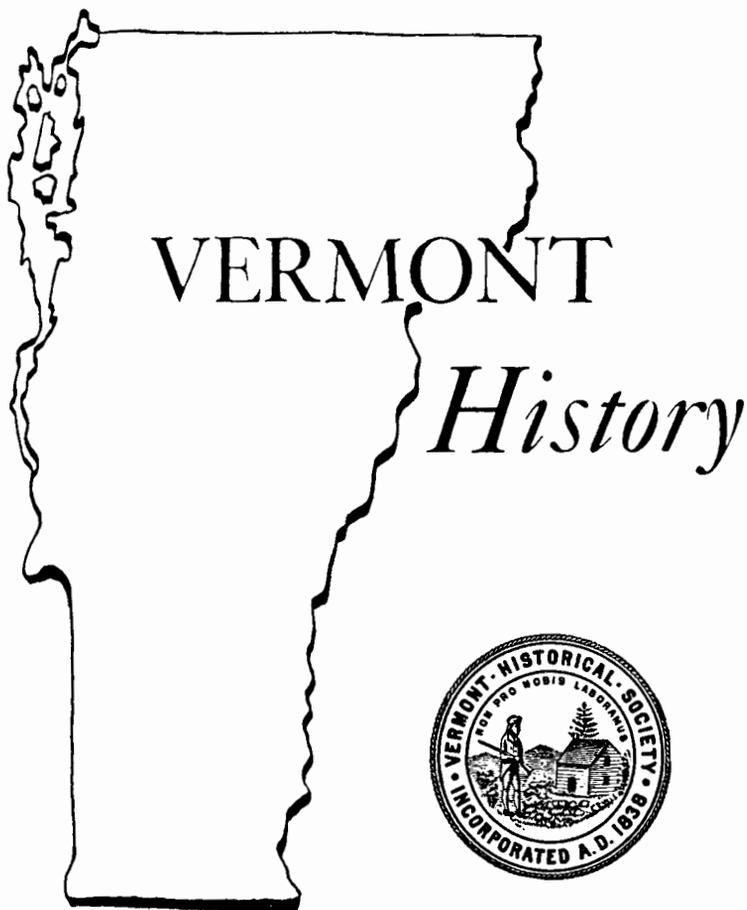
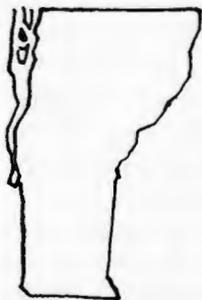


SPRING 1987

VOL. 55, NO. 2



The PROCEEDINGS of the
VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY



The Irish-born who moved into Northfield village arrived in impoverishment, suffered recurrent prejudice, yet attracted other Irish to the area through kinship and community networks. . .

“Years of Struggle”: The Irish in the Village of Northfield, 1845-1900*

By GENE SESSIONS

Most Irish immigrants to the United States in the nineteenth century settled in cities, and for that reason historians have focused on their experience in an urban-industrial setting.¹ Those who made their way to America's towns and villages have drawn less attention. A study of the settling-in process of nineteenth century Irish immigrants in the village of Northfield, Vermont, suggests their experience was similar, in important ways, to that of their urban counterparts. Yet the differences were significant, too, shaped not only by the particular characteristics of Northfield but also by adjustments within the Irish community itself. In the balance the Irish changed Northfield forever.

The Irish who came into Vermont and Northfield in the nineteenth century were a fraction of the migration of nearly five million who left Ireland between 1845 and 1900. Most of those congregated in the cities along the eastern seaboard of the United States. Others headed inland by riverboats and rail lines to participate in settling the cities of the west. Those who traveled to Vermont were the first sizable group of non-English immigrants to enter the Green Mountain state. The period of their greatest influx was the late 1840s and 1850s, and they continued to arrive in declining numbers through the end of the century.

*A portion of the work on this article was supported by a Dana faculty research grant from Norwich University.

Jobs on the railroad drew these early Irish immigrants to Vermont.² As the headquarters for the new Vermont Central Railroad with its general offices, engine house, machine and repair shops, from 1845 and continuing through the 1850s, Northfield offered numerous employment opportunities. In this way, Northfield, along with Rutland, Bennington, Brattleboro, Bellows Falls, St. Albans, Burlington, and other towns at important railroad locations, attracted significant Irish populations.

As an expanding railroad center, Northfield briefly entered the first rank of Vermont towns. In August 1845, engineers arrived in Northfield to begin surveying for the Vermont Central;³ by 1860, when 136 Vermont towns had registered a loss in residents during the previous decade, Northfield's population had increased by almost 50 percent, to 4,329, placing it with Burlington, Rutland, and Bennington among Vermont's largest towns.⁴ Its continued prosperity, however, depended on the Vermont Central, and after the railroad's management decided in the late 1850s to shift the carshops and central offices from Northfield to St. Albans, the town's economy and population began a prolonged contraction. Except for brief upsurges in 1866-73, caused by a short-lived slate quarrying boom, and in the early 1890s, resulting from the spillover expansion of Barre's granite industry, Northfield's economic slump continued to the end of the century.

Nonetheless, for these few years in the 1840s and 1850s, Northfield was an "increasingly populous, thriving and business town." A promotional description claimed it was "virtually a living, working, *hive, without a drone*."⁵ The railroad employed hundreds of workers in its road gangs, carshops, and machine shops. An iron foundry provided work for thirty to fifty men. Slate and granite quarries were opened. Physicians, tailors, clerks, butchers, and blacksmiths doubled their numbers.⁶ The town served as an overnight stopping place for passenger trains, and its freight yards occasionally accommodated as many as five hundred cars. Two weekly newspapers were published there; celebrities such as Horace Greeley⁷ came to town for speaking engagements; and Northfield became a center for statewide political, civic, and religious gatherings.

Economic prosperity brought "a very interesting population" to Northfield.⁸ Before the railroad arrived the town had a handful of foreign-born heads of household. Two years after the rails were laid, foreign residents and their children comprised 13 percent of the entire population, more than two-thirds of whom were Irish. The percentage of immigrants in Northfield continued to grow through the end of the century; the Irish predominated. By 1860 the Irish and their children represented 17 percent of the town's population, and 65 percent of all immigrants. In 1870, one in five of all residents, and 67 percent of the immigrant

population was Irish. Only at the end of the century did the Irish percentage of the immigrant population in town begin to decline. By 1900, reflecting a renewed economic life stimulated by Barre's granite industry, Northfield's Irish railroad and textile workers had been joined by granite cutters from Spain, Norway, Italy, Denmark, and Sweden; clothing merchants from Russia; slate cutters from Wales; weavers from Scotland; a fruit dealer from Italy; farmers from Germany, France, and England; and even a laundryman from China.⁹

IRISH IN NORTHFIELD, 1850-1900*

Year	Northfield Total Population	Irish-Born & Their Children	Percent of Total Population	IRISH POPULATION					
				Irish-Born	Percent Irish-Born	Born in VT	Percent Born in VT	Born Elsewhere	Percent Born Elsewhere
1850	2,922	262	09%	198	76%	62	24%	2	--%
1860	4,329	737	17%	468	64%	255	34%	14	2%
1870	3,410	696	20%	271	39%	397	57%	28	4%
1880	2,836	445	16%	162	36%	280	63%	3	1%
1900	2,865	458	16%	110	24%	283	62%	65	14%

*Source: U.S. Census, Schedule 1, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, and 1900. The U.S. Census for 1890 was unavailable.

Of the Irish who entered Northfield in the nineteenth century, the overwhelming majority came from the southernmost counties of Cork, Kerry, Clare, Limerick, Tipperary, and Kilkenny, the regions hardest hit by the potato famine of the mid- and late 1840s.¹⁰ In the early years most arrived at Canadian ports of entry at Halifax, Quebec, and Montreal, which were ill-prepared to receive them. In 1847 the *Montreal Herald* complained of "this pouring out of paupers upon us,"¹¹ and an observer described the condition of Irish immigrants arriving at Montreal's "immigrant sheds" as "truly deplorable. Nothing ever read of in the slave trade can exceed the misery I am daily witnessing."¹²

Prospects did not much improve as they moved into Vermont by foot, or following waterways, to join the labor gangs of the state's fledgling railroad construction projects.¹³ Accompanied by wives and children, they crowded into small cabins and "knockdown shacks" that were moved forward as road construction progressed.¹⁴ Typhus, or "ship fever," which had been rampant at Montreal's "immigrant sheds" in the summer of 1847, pursued them to the Vermont Central railroad camps at Burlington, Montpelier, Roxbury, and Royalton, with loss of life running especially high at Royalton.¹⁵ Wages for the workers were low, and sometimes there was no pay at all. In the summer of 1846, workers on the roadbed near Bolton fought the "Bolton War" against detachments of the Vermont state militia in an unsuccessful effort to get their pay.¹⁶

When unpaid Irish laborers called a strike at Sharon in the summer of 1847, it was broken up by a company of Norwich University cadets who fired a blank round from a cannon.¹⁷ Other hazards challenged their endurance: earthen banks collapsed on helpless workers; explosives ignited prematurely; bridges gave way; and work trains derailed, sometimes with fatal effect.¹⁸ Feuds between rival Irish railroad factions, murder, and suicide also shadowed the work camps.¹⁹

The most poignant incidents involved Irish family members who became separated. An issue of the *Vermont Watchman* in 1848 included the plea of an Irish mother at Hartford, Windsor County, for information about her sixteen-year-old son who had arrived in Vermont from Ireland and was searching for her.²⁰ A notice in a Northfield newspaper told of an Irish woman with children searching for her husband who had gone to "look for work among the farmers" of central Vermont. "Any person giving information . . . of his whereabouts will confer a great favor on the bereaved wife and children of the missing man."²¹

With construction of the Vermont Central railbeds completed by 1849, Northfield became a magnet for Irish immigrants seeking steady employment. Data from the United States census of 1850 provides information about those earliest Irish who moved into town.²² There were eighty-three Irish men in Northfield's work force at the time the census was taken that year, about half of whom were married with families. Two-thirds of all adults could read and write English. Family men averaged forty years of age, and families included an average of three children, usually all under age ten. Almost half of the men were either single or without wives. Their age averaged twenty-six years, the same average age as the twenty single Irish women in town.²³

Of those who were married, most found housing in single-family "shanties" built along the railroad tracks at the edge of the village south of the depot. Other Irish families shared housing with relatives or boarded, often with another Irish family. Single Irish men and women took housing in one of several rooming houses in town or boarded with a family, usually also Irish.²⁴ In later years, substantial Irish enclaves developed along Cox ("Paddy") Brook Road, northwest of town, and on Turkey Hill, on the town's northeast periphery.²⁵ By 1900 almost half were concentrated in three or four specific residential clusters, primarily in the village itself.

Most of the earliest Irish arrivals, and those who followed, did not stay in town long.²⁶ Only about one-fourth of Irish men listed in the town's labor force in the censuses of 1850, 1860, and 1870 remained for as long as a decade. Even in the 1850s, when the town experienced its period of greatest economic and population growth, the movement out was substantial. In that decade Northfield's total population grew by one-third,

yet only 22 percent of the Irish workingmen who had been in town in 1850 were still there in 1860.

With their high physical mobility they were similar to Irish immigrants elsewhere in the United States and many other groups in the national population in the nineteenth century.²⁷ The movement of many Irish who entered Northfield was within Vermont itself. It was commonplace after the 1850s for an Irish workingman in Northfield to have lived in two or more other Vermont towns. An example is Robert Gillespie, who arrived in the United States in the early 1860s at age twelve, and lived in Ripton and Randolph prior to settling in Northfield in the 1880s.²⁸ Thomas O'Grady left Croath, Limerick County, Ireland, emigrated through the port of Montreal, and entered Vermont where he lived for several years in Braintree and Granville before moving to Northfield in the 1870s.²⁹ Mathias Cannon, an earlier immigrant, lived for several years in Stowe, moved to Northfield in 1842, and finally settled in Moretown in the 1850s. One of his sons, James, was born in Northfield, eventually moved to Berlin, then to St. Johnsbury, and back to Northfield.³⁰ At least one in five Irish heads-of-household in nearby Berlin and Roxbury in 1880 resided also in Northfield sometime between 1850 and 1900.³¹

The instability in Northfield's Irish population was related in part to its position at the bottom of the town's occupational scale. Irish men were generally unskilled and filled Northfield's low-wage jobs in disproportionate numbers. They worked in railroad section gangs, in the freight yards, on the wood trains, or in the village as teamsters, stable hands, or as hired help for farmers. In 1850 more than four of every five Irish workingmen in Northfield were employed in such arduous or seasonal jobs offering little promise of advancement. Although in that year they represented slightly less than 10 percent of the male work force, they made up 22 percent of the town's unskilled labor force.

By 1860, with Northfield near its peak of economic expansion, a few Irish men managed to get skilled and semi-skilled jobs as machinists, wheelwrights, shoemakers, painters, or coopers. Irish men accounted for almost half of the thirty blacksmiths in town. Nevertheless, in that year, slightly more than 60 percent of all Irish workingmen were employed as day or farm laborers, representing approximately one out of three of all unskilled jobs in town.³² By 1880 more than 40 percent of Irish men continued to toil as common laborers, and the range of jobs held by Irish men had decreased with the shrinkage of the town's economy and its population during the 1860s.³³

Irish women in Northfield's work force fared no better than the men. Although the census for 1850 did not record the employment of women, most if not all the twenty Irish females living singly in town that year probably worked as domestic servants in the homes of Northfield natives.



The village of Northfield, c. 1870. Courtesy of Northfield Historical Society

An “Irish joke,” published in a Northfield newspaper in 1855, suggests the prominent role played by young Irish girls as servants in the 1850s: “My son, how could you marry an Irish girl?” “Why, father,” replies the son, “I’m not able to keep two women — if I’d married a Yankee girl, I’d had to hired [sic] an Irish girl to take care of her.”³⁴ According to the census of 1860, sixty-one Irish women in Northfield held jobs, all of them as domestic servants; and in every census through the end of the century Irish women represented a significant percentage of the town’s household servants. But generally only widowed or unmarried Irish women were employed; it was rare in Northfield for a married Irish woman to have a job of any kind away from her home, regardless of the family’s economic condition.

Despite marginal occupational mobility, those Irish who did stay in Northfield a decade or more generally were able to acquire some real estate holdings. According to the census schedules, approximately one-half, or more, of all Irish men in the work force who were new to the Northfield census in the years 1850, 1860, or 1870, and who remained in town, managed to acquire some real property after ten years.³⁵ The town list for 1880 showed that more than 70 percent of Irish names included on the list in that year possessed real property.³⁶

Unsurprisingly, those who owned property tended to remain in town longer than those who did not. Nevertheless, the migration out was high even for Irish who managed to acquire property.³⁷ Patrick Horn, John

Robinson, and Michael Malloly were examples. Both Horn and Robinson arrived in the late 1840s, and by 1850 had achieved some success: in that year Horn owned a farm worth one thousand dollars, and Robinson, a shoemaker, acquired five hundred dollars in real property. However, each soon left town, never to appear in another Northfield census. Malloly came to Northfield during the 1850s, and at the age of thirty-five in 1860 he and his wife and three sons owned a farm valued at \$1,100. However, not long afterwards they also were gone from town.³⁸ Approximately one-half of Irish workingmen new to the census in 1850, 1860, and 1870 who owned property in the first year they appeared in the Northfield census were not in town ten years later.³⁹

The exodus of Irish property holders was influenced by the general contraction in Northfield's economy after 1860, but also by the modest size of Irish property accumulations, which were generally too small to hold the Irish newcomers in town. Except in 1850, when four of the only six property holders were small farmers, every census year in which real property holdings were reported (1850, 1860, 1870) showed the bulk of Irish values substantially below the mid-level range of one thousand dollars to six thousand dollars, with Horn and Malloly's properties, for example, at the lower end of the mid-level range.⁴⁰

In almost every instance, those owning real estate valued at one thousand dollars or more were in farming. Nationwide, only a small percentage of Irish went into agricultural occupations. Although the average was higher in Northfield, not many of the town's Irish became farmers. A brief item in the local newspaper in 1879 relates one Irish workingman's decision to shift to the land. The item told of Michael Mackin who "for nearly thirty years" had worked "for the railroad folks and leaves now through no fault on either side, but simply because he would like to try farming."⁴¹

Irish opportunities in agriculture were boosted by the region's economic depression and the out-migration and deaths of native farmers. The move to farming was also facilitated by the relatively small size of local farms, and their declining cash value. Less than half of Northfield's farms in 1870 exceeded one hundred improved acres, and slightly more than one in four had a cash value of four thousand dollars or more. Relying on meager savings, most Irish residents who tried farming owned little acreage. In 1870 half of the Irish-owned farms were between fifty and one hundred improved acres in size (and two were smaller than fifty acres).⁴² This pattern in the size of Irish farms did not change through the end of the century.⁴³

It is apparent that, as a group, Northfield's Irish, as their counterparts nationwide, made little headway in farming. At the turn of the century, more than 40 percent of the Irish-born in Northfield's work force were

farmers, but only 8 percent of the native-born sons of Irish families were in agriculture. Almost one in four of all Northfield's male job holders were farmers in 1900, but Irish-born workers and their sons, representing 15 percent of the town's male work force, made up only 11 percent of the town's farmers.⁴⁴

Except for the handful of Irish men who achieved a measure of success as farmers, the record shows no pattern of significant progress in property acquisition by Northfield's Irish newcomers. Comparison of these findings with data on real estate acquisitions by native unskilled workingmen indicates that relatively smaller proportions of such native workers who remained in Northfield for a decade or more managed to acquire real estate. However, the value of the typical holdings of those who did was significantly greater than that of Irish property owners, and that value typically held its own, or increased over time, while Irish holdings generally did not.⁴⁵



Irish workers did much of the unskilled labor of the Northfield community. This late nineteenth century photograph shows railroad laborers along the tracks in Northfield. Courtesy of Northfield Historical Society

Disparities in wealth and consumption style emphasized the Irish underclass identity. In the census of 1870 a woolen mill owner in town, and his son, claimed \$234,850 in real and personal property. In the same year almost 85 percent of Irish workingmen held real and personal property totaling less than one thousand dollars, and 42 percent possessed no property at all. In 1900, when hard work still yielded meager savings

for Irish workers, even with several family members working, the grand list showed that more than three-quarters of all Irish real property owners held property valued at less than one thousand dollars.⁴⁶ Other Northfield residents of that time, however, were more comfortably situated. In the previous decade it had become

the fashion for the more affluent couples of the town to live at the hotel. . . . [W]ives or grown daughters of men who could afford and encouraged such practice either had maids to do their housework or boarded out. Beautifully gowned, such ladies did little work and spent their time visiting or calling on each other and doing fine needlework.⁴⁷

A sketch of the life history of one Irish family can help in understanding the occupational and social experience in Northfield of many from the Emerald Isle in the nineteenth century. Hannah McCarty emigrated to the United States in 1850 from County Cork. She and her Irish-born husband, James, settled in Northfield sometime in the late 1850s. When James died in 1871, he left behind eight children for Hannah to care for, the youngest of whom was only two days old. James never managed to attain more than a day laborer's wages in Northfield, and although in the census of 1860 he reported one hundred dollars in personal property, he declared no property ownership of any kind in the 1870 census. Hannah's children went to work as soon as they were old enough, the five sons taking jobs with the railroad, and the daughters as table waiters and servants in the households of Northfield merchants. The family stayed together, sharing its small income. None of the sons ever married or left home, and Hannah eventually outlived them all. Son Charles began working for the Vermont Central railroad as "a little boy," spent almost twenty years as a railway freight conductor, and died in 1908 at age forty-six. In 1909 Thomas died of tuberculosis at age forty-five. John was killed in 1912, also at age forty-five, in a fall from a carriage in which he had been driving passengers. Earlier John had lost a foot in an accident while employed as a brakeman for the railroad. At the time of his death, he held three railroad-related jobs—as janitor at the railroad station, flagman at the village crossing, and as handyman in the freight office. The years of hard work and sacrifice in Northfield by Hannah and her children enabled the family in 1885 to accumulate enough savings to buy a modest house, free of mortgage, along the Dog River. After her last son died, Hannah lived alone in the family house until her own death in 1922, at age ninety-eight, ending, as her brief obituary notice stated, "her years of struggle."⁴⁸

The limited opportunity of Irish immigrants for upward mobility was reinforced by attitudes of suspicion and intolerance among Northfield's native population. The Irish were culturally distinct from the community

they entered, and prejudice against them made relevant the admonition of nineteenth century Irish-American publicist Thomas D'Arcy McGee to his immigrant contemporaries:

In the villages of New England
Are you happy, we would know?
Are you welcome, are you trusted?
Are you not! Then Rise and Go!⁴⁹

Northfield's Irish newcomers had ample reason to feel unwelcome. One local observer, a member of a prominent family who grew up in the Northfield vicinity in the late 1840s, later wrote of the area:

It would be very difficult, if not impossible to give . . . any conception of the bigotry and narrow provincialism which prevailed as a tyrant over the consciences, the judgement and even the manners and customs of communities and of individuals at this period.⁵⁰

Northfield's principal newspaper in the 1850s provided one indication of the cultural gulf between newcomer and native, bluntly describing the Irish as a "foreign, aggressive, and uncongenial element."⁵¹ Smug, scornful jokes and other newspaper references to the "Hibernian simplicity" of young Irish girls⁵² and the presumed helplessness and foolishness of Irish men⁵³ served to buttress unflattering stereotypes. The newcomers' clothes and habits were unfamiliar and their brogues heavy.⁵⁴ As late as the 1880s the appearance in Northfield of newly arrived European immigrants in "strange dress, and stranger language" could still produce "considerable amusement."⁵⁵ It was the immigrants' religion, however, that created the greatest concern and disdain. The famine Irish were overwhelmingly Roman Catholic and they arrived in Northfield at a time of rising anti-Catholic sentiment in the state and throughout the nation. Across the country many people had become convinced that the waves of Irish arriving on United States shores, bearing allegiance to an "authoritarian Pope," were not capable of allegiance to "democratic" America.

In the 1850s, Northfield provided fertile soil for the short-lived, fiercely anti-Catholic American or "Know-Nothing" Party. Because it focused on the dangers of allowing universal manhood suffrage and Roman Catholicism to stand together, Know-Nothingism and anti-Catholic agitation were allied in the public mind. A familiar joke ascribed to the Know-Nothings the desire to alter the Declaration of Independence so that it read "life, liberty, and the pursuit of Irishmen."⁵⁶ One Northfield Know-Nothing leader, Charles H. Joyce, gained election as Washington County state's attorney in 1856 and was appointed state librarian.⁵⁷ William Wordsworth, another Northfield Know-Nothing spokesman, founded a weekly newspaper, *Star of Vermont*, in Northfield in 1854 for the purpose of spreading the movement's views. Wordsworth's publi-

cation, which displayed a large spread eagle on its masthead, was described by the *Franklin County Herald* as "opposed to all foreigners" and filled with "know-nothing editorials."⁵⁸ In 1854 Northfield voters sent Wordsworth to Montpelier for the first of two successive terms in the state legislature.⁵⁹

The *Vermont Christian Messenger*, a Methodist-oriented newspaper with a statewide distribution, was also published in Northfield in the 1850s. Its editor, W. S. Manley, harbored Know-Nothing sentiments, although he formally denied that he was "an open and undisguised advocate" of Know-Nothingism and professed neutrality on the political issues involved.⁶⁰ Yet Manley publicly complained that "foreign immigration is so largely Catholic,"⁶¹ and he charged that the movement's opponents within the state were Vermont's "anti-American" party.⁶² While acknowledging that the American Party might "kindle a spirit of persecuting intolerance in the protestant," he instructed readers that such would only have "local and temporary results." He believed the advantage gained in a greater native understanding of the "Romanist" menace more than justified the movement's efforts.⁶³

In 1854 at private Northfield Academy, which Manley formerly served as principal, school directors announced the hiring of a new teacher of French with a statement assuring the community that the new addition to the staff was "a Protestant . . . and therefore may be trusted with any responsibility that he will assume."⁶⁴ At the Academy's New Year's Eve "social levee" that year, the student chosen president for the occasion mixed politics and poor humor in selecting "the Know-Nothings" as the subject of his toast. "Though we may all be Know-Nothings *in politics*," he offered, "may we never be found Know-Nothings *at school*."⁶⁵ Early in 1855 approximately four hundred delegates converged on Northfield for a statewide Know-Nothing convention.⁶⁶

In addition to carrying the burden of their religion, Northfield's Irish became identified with the town's emerging social problems. Drunkenness, pauperism, and criminality had been escalating in Northfield, as well as other railroad towns across the state, since the mid-1840s. Northfield citizens worried about "law and order."⁶⁷ They became concerned for "the reputation of our village,"⁶⁸ the need to encourage "elevating and refining influences";⁶⁹ and the moral improvement of Northfield's youth "in this age when 'boys as a race are so fast becoming extinct.'"⁷⁰ By the mid-1850s "the recent rapid augmentation of that flourishing place"⁷¹ created pressures that found outlet against the town's new Irish arrivals. The unfortunate case of James Donnelly provided a convenient public example of Irish degradation. The *Christian Messenger* reported in 1854 that after "a few weeks" of employment in the *Messenger* office, Donnelly, "an Irishman," was suspected of theft; he then left for

Northampton where he soon was also suspected, and charged, with theft and with setting fire to the office of the *Northampton Gazette* as well. The *Christian Messenger* concluded that Donnelly "had done what he could" to make "a finished villain of himself."⁷²

The social issue that dominated all others, however, was liquor, and Northfield's anti-liquor forces viewed the Irish as abettors of the local rum party and major contributors to the town's "epidemic" of "beastly drunkenness."⁷³ According to the *Christian Messenger*, the "infernal trade" in liquor was carried on in "a number of Irish shanties" and "Irish dens."⁷⁴ And when not selling, the Irish were buying: to one local observer "the Paddies" seemed always ready to receive the rum sellers "to their shanties." "Beer selling" was also "rapidly on the increase," so that "Irish shanties in our suburbs, and Yankee grogeries in our midst . . . almost daily send their staggering victims, as so many traveling advertisements through our streets."⁷⁵ Another townsman, acknowledging that the problem was not merely an Irish one, exhorted friends of temperance to "pitch into them again, and spare neither Irish shanty or gilded saloon."⁷⁶ Townfolks eagerly responded to such appeals, launching the Northfield Temperance Alliance (1853), the Northfield Ladies' and Gentlemen's Temperance Society (1856), and the Sons of Temperance, Central Division, No. 80 (1857).⁷⁷ Much of the town's temperance constituency in the 1850s was shared with the local Know-Nothings.⁷⁸

Temperance advocates pointed to the personal conduct of the town's Irish as a way of illustrating liquor's destructive effects. Northfield newspaper accounts of fatal accidents involving local Irish workingmen regularly linked the tragic events to liquor. Thus, readers of the *Christian Messenger* learned that John Sullivan was found drowned "in a drunken fit" near "the Irish shanties" in a pond of water only six inches deep,⁷⁹ and that Michael Tracy, after making "free with a flask of liquor," had fallen under a moving train "in a state of insensibility," severing both legs. The incident added "another victim to the multitude sacrificed to intemperance."⁸⁰ In another report the *Christian Messenger's* readers were told that "an Irishman named Michael Cochran, dead drunk on Michael Hurley's liquor, laid down upon the track, within the railroad yard in this village, and was demolished by the first train that came along."⁸¹ The Irish and liquor were so closely associated in town that on the occasion of a particularly controversial court trial of a liquor law violation, in which a jury sympathetic to the defendant was impaneled, the exasperated *Christian Messenger* editor commented, "The wonder is, that they did not add John O'Groat's name."⁸²

The view of the Irish newcomers as disruptive and untrustworthy was no doubt enhanced by the activity in Vermont in the late 1860s of the American branch of the Fenian movement. The Fenians, as the Irish

Revolutionary Brotherhood was popularly known, were an organization of Irish immigrants committed to liberating their Irish homeland from British rule. It is not known whether any of Northfield's Irish were involved in the abortive raids by Fenians into Canada in 1866 and 1870,⁸³ but a significant organization of "the conspiratorial brotherhood" did take hold for a time in Northfield. Within six months after the Fenian organization entered Vermont in late 1865, Northfield had established one of thirteen Fenian "circles" in the state, including a "flourishing" branch of the "Fenian Sisterhood," one of only six statewide.⁸⁴ At a St. Patrick's Day parade in Burlington in 1866, Northfield Fenians marched with groups from Burlington, St. Albans, Waterbury, and elsewhere in the state. Attending a banquet and dance that evening was Northfield's John D. Dwyer, who provided one of the toasts for the occasion. Asking that "God Bless the Fair Sisters," he called for those Vermont daughters of Erin who were not yet enrolled in the Fenian Sisterhood to promptly do so.⁸⁵ The vigor of this local chapter of a militant nationalist organization, emphasizing Irish distinctiveness, represented an additional source of Irish tension with Northfield's native population.

Nevertheless, there is little evidence of physical confrontations or clashes between old residents and the new in Northfield during the entire period 1845 to 1900. It is likely that natives in Northfield did not so much want to drive the Irish away, as to protect the town's institutions from Irish penetration and, eventually, to make over the newcomers according to their own model. "We have a duty" toward the Irish, the *Christian Messenger* asserted. "That duty consists in toleration for the sake of evangelization."⁸⁶ In fact, several circumstances facilitated the Irish settling-in process in town under conditions more equitable to the newcomers than xenophobic natives might have expected (or wanted), so that by the 1880s and 1890s there was a growing measure of Irish toleration, and even acceptance, in the community.

Specific action by the Irish themselves contributed to this process. As with Irish immigrants throughout the north,⁸⁷ the Civil War provided an occasion for the Irish in Northfield to dispel native suspicion of their loyalties. Shortly after the firing on Fort Sumter, "a brilliant oratorical priest by the name of Father Hogan" encouraged local enlistments at a patriotic rally on Northfield's village green.⁸⁸ Many of Northfield's Irish males did respond to the Union call, and several died in the fighting.⁸⁹ When the Civil War ended, the contribution of returning Irish veterans was recognized in their acceptance as members of the local post of the Grand Army of the Republic. On Decoration Day in 1885 the town commemorated those who served in the Civil War by dedicating a "soldiers' monument" on which appeared the names of all the community's veterans, Irish and native alike.⁹⁰

Another avenue for assimilation was the town's schools. One observer of late nineteenth century Vermont life wrote of the immigrant experience in his town that a principal reason for the mollifying of the community's "religious suspicion" was "association . . . at school."⁹¹ In 1850, according to the census, almost eighty Irish children, ages four to eighteen, were enrolled in Northfield schools for at least part of the year. In every census year through the end of the century⁹² virtually every Irish child of school age was identified as having attended school during the year.⁹³ The mean attendance figures at the town's schools were always significantly lower than enrollment, yet at Northfield Graded School's 1879 winter term, more than one-third of students with perfect attendance records belonged to Irish families.⁹⁴ Also by that year an Irish woman had been hired as a teacher in the Northfield schools,⁹⁵ and a second-generation Irish railroad worker, David Hassett, had gained membership on the high school's board of directors.⁹⁶ In the 1890s it was commonplace for the names of Irish women to be found among the annual lists of the town's teachers.⁹⁷

In the post-Civil War period Northfield natives also developed a grudging respect for the growth and accomplishments of the Irish-dominated Catholic congregation, and with it a gradual acceptance of the church's existence in town. The first mass celebrated in Northfield was "in one of the shanties along the line of the Vermont Central Railroad" in 1846.⁹⁸ Within the next ten years Catholics were able to purchase a church structure of their own, called St. John the Evangelist, at a site on King Street.⁹⁹ In 1876 lightning struck the church building, burning it to the ground. St. John's financially strapped members quickly constructed a new six hundred seat structure at a cost of ten thousand dollars on a plot of land in an area where "many of the prominent residents of the town lived."¹⁰⁰ Squeezed from small earnings were funds for a pastor's residence, improvements of the rectory, and chimes. An organ was purchased in the 1890s.¹⁰¹ By the turn of the century the church, nevertheless, was "practically free of debt."¹⁰² In 1878 a town historian wrote that St. John's Church possessed "the largest number of communicants, and the best church edifice in Northfield," and observed that "Their zeal and devotion to their principles is worthy of emulation" by the town's other congregations.¹⁰³ Indeed, on a mid-summer Sunday morning in 1882, attendance at St. John's was almost equal to the combined attendance of all other churches in Northfield.¹⁰⁴

The gradual acceptance of the Irish Catholic presence was reflected in its treatment by the town's newspaper. When the *Northfield News* began publication in 1879, the obvious anti-Catholicism that had been characteristic of the departed *Christian Messenger* and *Star of Vermont* during the 1850s was missing from its pages.¹⁰⁵ Consequently, towns-



Over time Northfield residents came to accept the Roman Catholic church as a local institution. Pictured here is the interior of St. John's Church as it appeared, elaborately decorated, in 1886. Courtesy of St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Northfield

people were informed in a straightforward manner by the *Northfield News* about St. John's tent fairs at Riverside park, St. Patrick's Day lectures on such topics as "the Versatility of Irish Genius" and "One Hundred Years of Catholicity," and about the Social and Dramatic Club's presentations of "Shamrock and Rose" and other church productions at the town's concert hall. When the American Protective Association, an anti-Catholic secret society emerged as a national political force in the 1890s, the *Northfield News* editor denounced it as "un-American," and observed "the fact that Catholics have borne an honorable part in our national and local affairs is indisputable."¹⁰⁶

The Irish also gradually established in town a solid record of thrift, industry, and self-reliance. These ostensible "Yankee" characteristics emerged among Northfield's Irish during the period of greatest economic difficulties in the town's history. From 1860 until 1890 the times grew harder for everyone in Northfield, but especially for the lower strata, as the local economy slowed almost to a halt. One resident recalled those years:

Business, especially industry, was so dull and employment so limited then that I can hardly understand how, with the small incomes realized in that period, families, some of them large ones, managed to eke out a livelihood; but they did, mostly, somehow.¹⁰⁷

By 1880, despite the hard times, several Irish families had managed

to accumulate some property stake in Northfield. The grand list for that year showed fifty Irish owners of real estate. Although one-half of this group owned an acre or less, six owned more than one hundred acres each. At the same time, the number of Irish farmers in town had grown to thirty-one, representing almost one-fourth of all Irish job holders in that year.¹⁰⁸

By 1900 most Irish still had not been able to accumulate any substantial sum of money. Nevertheless, 58 percent of Irish heads-of-household had acquired their own homes, compared to 52 percent home ownership for the town as a whole; and only one-fourth of Irish homes were mortgaged, compared to 36 percent for homeowners as a whole.¹⁰⁹ But it required the employment of many members of the Irish family to accumulate funds for home ownership. The disproportionately high drop-out figures for Irish boys and girls above age twelve in Northfield schools suggests the sacrifice Irish families made to acquire their own homes. Seldom did an Irish child's education go beyond age twelve or thirteen. In 1874 the children of Irish immigrants represented 21 percent of all boys and 24 percent of all girls enrolled in Northfield graded schools who were age thirteen or younger. But they accounted for only 2 percent of all boys and 7 percent of all girls in school above that age.¹¹⁰

In the difficult times after the mid-1860s, Irish residents of Northfield did not contribute disproportionately to the public burden. In the early years of that decade, Irish individuals and families had made up about one-third of those assisted by the overseer of the poor.¹¹¹ Yet after the town poor farm was set up in the late 1860s, the 1870 census showed that no Irish person was living there, despite an increase during the previous decade by the Irish in their proportion of the population as a whole.¹¹² In the census of 1880 only three of the thirty-one individuals identified as being out of work all or part of that year were Irish; and of the nine paupers living at the poor farm at the time of the census, only two were Irish.¹¹³ They represented 16 percent of the town's population in that year, but they accounted for only slightly more than 10 percent of the entries in the record of the overseer of the poor.¹¹⁴

By 1900 the most prosperous Irishmen in town were farmers, but the most visible in leading the assimilation of the Irish population in the community were a handful of second generation village men who had found ways to move out of the manual labor force to self-employment, mainly in retail trade and services. Most of these men, in their twenties and thirties at the turn of the century, were associated in leadership positions with the church-related fraternal order, the Catholic Order of Foresters (COF). Northfield's COF branch, the Abraham Lincoln Court, was organized in 1896, with twenty-six members, all immigrant sons or grandsons.¹¹⁵

Irish families sacrificed to pay for improvements for St. John's Church, including the addition of three bells at a cost of \$1,000. This photograph shows the raising of one of the bells in 1886. Courtesy of St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Northfield



The constant high rate of Irish exodus from town affected the stability of COF membership, but the eight young men chosen as officers during the organization's first complete year all proved to be long-term Northfield residents. The Order's chief officer in that year was thirty-three-year old Mathias Cannon, Jr., whose Irish-born grandfather had come to Vermont in the 1830s, and whose father had worked in Northfield and elsewhere as a day laborer. In 1900 Mathias Cannon, Jr., was a merchant in the village and active in civic affairs. In the two succeeding decades, Northfield residents elected him to some of the town's most prominent leadership positions, as village trustee and as town representative to the state legislature. At the time of his death in 1928, he "was engaged in the second-hand business which he conducted at his home" on the southwestern edge of the village.¹¹⁶ Three other officers in 1896, John Harrigan, W. H. Moriarty, and J. C. Donahue, eventually established local grocery businesses and went on to achieve a degree of prominence in local affairs. Harrigan, whose father came to Northfield as a railroad worker in 1866, became a director of Northfield Trust Company; Moriarty, the son of a teamster and day laborer, was appointed in 1931 as Northfield's postmaster; Donahue, whose father arrived in town in the 1850s and spent his life as a common laborer, gradually accumulated substantial property holdings. One of the town's earliest telephones was installed in his home. Eventually his son and his grandson served as Northfield postmasters.¹¹⁷

The career of one other COF charter member, Jeremiah Donahue, is notable. Donahue was born in Northfield in 1867, the son of an Irish slate quarry laborer who arrived in town in the mid-1860s. As a young

man, Donahue took his first job with the Central Vermont Railroad, won promotion as a conductor, and eventually was named station agent at Montpelier Junction before quitting the railroad to establish a livery business in Northfield. There he earned the trust and respect of his community and in 1907 was named Northfield's first police chief. Donahue became "known throughout Vermont for his skill as a detective," and held the office with distinction until his death in 1926.¹¹⁸



One of the first Irish residents of Northfield to achieve a position of civic responsibility was Jeremiah Donahue who became chief of police in 1906. He is shown here in uniform. Portrait undated. Courtesy of Northfield Historical Society

The easing of the worst tensions of the early years did not lead to an increased Irish political presence in town, despite the modest success of men like Mathias Cannon, Jr., and Jeremiah Donahue. Although it is likely that some new Irish citizens were like J. C. Donahue, who had the reputation of having "never missed a poll,"¹¹⁹ town records indicate that in the four decades following the Irish influx few Irish names appeared among the lists of those taking the freeman's oath, required for

voting.¹²⁰ Few, also, were the names of Irish men who managed to gain positions of public responsibility at annual town or freeman's meetings, other than as highway surveyors, prior to 1900. Dublin-born Thomas Elliott was chosen as a justice of the peace in 1863, 1878, and 1880, and as a petit juror in 1879. A scattering of Irish men made losing bids in this period for the office of justice of the peace: Elliott in 1866; John D. Dwyer, the Fenian leader, in 1867; William B. Granfield, a farmer, in 1872; David Hassett, a railroad machinist, in 1876; F. N. Cook, a woolen worker, and William McAuliff, a farmer, both in 1880. By the late 1870s and 1880s Irish in Northfield were serving as fire wardens, and on rare occasions as petit jurors and school board directors.¹²¹ Records of the annual village meeting show that only one Irish man gained village office in the nineteenth century: beginning in 1870, Irish-born Henry Ferris, baggagemaster on the Vermont Central, served several terms as one of the village's five policemen, and in 1899, a term as fire marshal.¹²²

The political party structure reflected the Irish's marginal political role. "Most Democrats, of course, belonged to the Catholic church," Robert Duffus wrote of late nineteenth century Waterbury, Vermont.¹²³ Although it was probably true also of Northfield, the Democratic party in town was never "in the hands of the Irish"; natives kept control throughout the nineteenth century. When Maurice Ryan gained membership on the five-man town Democratic committee in 1893, his four colleagues on the committee all represented long-time Northfield families.¹²⁴ Thus, Northfield's Irish never gained significant political power as a voting block. If Irish did in fact stand together politically in Northfield, their numbers were never large enough for them to prevail without coalitions in a small town with a predominantly native population. Consequently, individual Irish men faced the double task of demonstrating individual merit and overcoming native animosity to gain elective office.

Although the Irish played a gradually larger role in community affairs toward the end of the century, the earlier prejudice and distrust did not completely recede. Throughout central Vermont in the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s, natives struggled to adjust to the growing numbers of foreigners in their midst.¹²⁵ Much of the lingering opposition stemmed from anti-Catholicism. Doubts about the motives of "the Romish Church" continued in student debates, patriotic gatherings, and other political forums.¹²⁶ Vermont opponents of women's suffrage emphasized the potential increase in the foreign vote, and the danger that "foreign masses" would cast their votes according to the instructions of their religious teachers.¹²⁷ The unease also found indirect outlets. At a Northfield school, an Irish girl was subjected to particularly severe corporal punishment from her teacher,¹²⁸ and an editor of the high school's student newspaper, the son of an Irish railroad worker, felt keenly his neighbors' regret "that so good

a woman" as his mother "must burn in Hell forever and ever because she was an image-worshipping Romanist."¹²⁹ There were other signs, too, of the Irish relation to the community. In 1904, when the town constructed a "pest house" as quarters for quarantining transients ill with contagious diseases, the location selected for the structure was King Street, adjacent to an Irish neighborhood and the original Catholic cemetery.¹³⁰

Periodic eruptions of rowdiness and violence in Irish neighborhoods undoubtedly also served to keep alive in native minds the "pugnacious Irishman" stereotype. Dutifully, the *Northfield News* reported the "little stirs," the "short rows" on King Street, and the "fisting encounters," which occasionally led to arrests, fines, and incarcerations.¹³¹ Occasionally the conflicts were serious. One young Irishman, during the span of a few weeks in 1879, was accused of burning the barns of an Irish farmer in Berlin, of adultery with the wife of a Northfield saloonkeeper's son, and eventually with assault upon the woman's husband.¹³² At the town poor farm, a long-standing grudge between two Irish paupers, age seventy-seven and seventy-two, ended in the murder of one by the other.¹³³ In another incident an Irish farmer's son, who had a "hard reputation as a fighter," was convicted of attempting to kill another young Irish Northfield resident, on the road to Northfield Falls, and was sentenced to nine months in prison.¹³⁴ Although they represented only about 16 percent of the total population in the 1890s, Irish names were represented on more than one-third of the fines ordered by Northfield justices of the peace in that decade. In fact, during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, approximately one of every three fines levied involved Irish residents.¹³⁵

This record of Irish misconduct was perhaps partially mitigated in the eyes of natives by other actions of Irish community members, aimed at stemming the rowdiness. Dan Hurley's first act as boss of the railroad section gang in Northfield Falls in 1879 "was a bad one for the sports for he closed up their Sunday penny ante room with boards and a padlock."¹³⁶ In 1899 the priest of St. John's Church used his pulpit "to roundly score drunkenness, intemperance, gambling and loafing in Northfield."¹³⁷ And it was an Irish man, after all, Jeremiah Donahue, to whom the community turned for its first chief of police. Nevertheless, locally held stereotypes of Irish character were not weakened on the occasions during the 1890s when one Bartholomew Hennessy of Moretown visited Northfield for the purpose of displaying his chestnut stallion, which he proudly called "Wild Irishman."¹³⁸ Moreover, at the turn of the century, "Irish jokes" exploiting stereotyped images of Irish personality continued to appear in the local press.¹³⁹

In 1900 Northfield's population stood at 2,865, or fifty-seven fewer than at the onset of the town's railroad growth fifty years earlier. Sixteen

percent of these were Irish-Americans, but less than one in four had been born in Ireland. Almost half the Irish-born were sixty-five years of age or older, and almost one-quarter was seventy or over.¹⁴⁰ As the influx of Irish immigrants slowed, the Irish-born percentage of the continually growing immigrant proportion of the town's inhabitants was also declining, from a high of 77 percent in 1860 to just over 40 percent by 1900. The era of Irish predominance in Northfield's non-native population was coming to an end.

The nineteenth century Irish experience in the small community of Northfield had many similarities, and some important differences, with the urban-industrial Irish national pattern. Several social characteristics were similar. The Irish-born who moved into Northfield village arrived in impoverishment, suffered recurrent prejudice, yet attracted other Irish to the area through kinship and community networks, which helped ease the trauma of their adjustment to new surroundings. They tended to be young, with a relatively high literacy rate; they moved frequently and maintained a high degree of in-group marriage. They created a strong Catholic congregation and placed heavy social and emotional reliance on it, identified with Irish nationalism, and gained a reputation for disorderly conduct. They had a hunger for land, acquiring real estate more rapidly than their native counterparts while receiving wages no higher than native workmen. They gained employment in a narrow variety of manual laboring jobs, sent their children to work at an early age, but were reluctant to send wives and mothers outside the home for wages. By 1900, as with their primarily urban Irish counterparts at the national level, the children of Northfield's Irish immigrants, both male and female, moved upward on the occupational scale faster than their parents.

There were also dissimilarities. The worst hardships for the Irish in the United States were felt by those who were unable to rise out of unskilled, poorly paid occupations. The number in this plight was proportionately higher in Northfield, especially for the Irish second generation, than for their counterparts nationwide. In 1880 about half of Irish-Americans in town were unskilled, the same as Irish nationally; but two-thirds of local Irish immigrant sons also remained unskilled compared to only about one-third nationwide. By 1900 the proportion of Irish-born in Northfield employed in unskilled jobs had dropped to one-fourth, the same as for Irish-born men nationally, but Northfield's Irish sons continued to lag with about one-fourth still in unskilled work, compared to less than one-fifth nationwide. The same held for Northfield's Irish daughters, almost 40 percent of whom worked in domestic service in 1900, compared to less than 20 percent for their primarily urban counterparts.¹⁴¹

There are other dissimilarities as well. Because in Northfield their numbers were not as formidable or as clustered, the Irish presence did



By the end of World War I—as this 1916 portrait of a communion class suggests—the Irish had become an integral part of the Northfield community. Courtesy of St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Northfield

not trigger in natives the kind of fear for the survival of middle-class Protestant values that brought violence elsewhere. Because they formed no political blocs in town and made no challenges to the Protestant-dominated school system, they defused the most potent of the national anti-Irish themes. The continuing economic need of natives of Northfield for their Irish population also undercut the potential for conflict and narrowed the cultural gulf between them. It was commonplace in shrinking Vermont communities in the 1880s and 1890s to hope that European immigrants could be recruited to occupy abandoned farms, preferably Protestant immigrants from northern Europe.¹⁴² But few of the “desirable,” “better sort of immigrants”¹⁴³ came. Consequently the Irish who persisted in Northfield and those who continued to come were desperately needed, to occupy the town’s vacant houses, to buy and consume local goods, and to provide income for the local economy.

At the same time the exigencies of their new surroundings obliged Northfield’s Irish, at least in superficial ways, to assimilate the norms about them. To make a livelihood, to attain improvement in status, to survive in a harsh and difficult time, adjustments in behavior, if not outlook,

were carried out and the process of socialization went forward. Their own strenuous self-help and perseverance coincidentally accorded with the basic urgings of their nativist neighbors' Protestant ethic. As with the Irish in the nation as a whole, the Irish-born population of Northfield declined significantly in late nineteenth century. With time's passage, they became less eager to acknowledge their Irish identity: when a new, second Catholic cemetery opened in Northfield in 1901, headstones did not record the Irish origins of the deceased, as those at the old King Street cemetery painstakingly had done. Even among the Irish-born old-timers the experience of adjustment and change, whether chosen or imposed, had produced a notable effect on identity. In 1914 the *Northfield News* announced the death of seventy-six-year old Margaret Holland, who had emigrated from Ireland to the United States in 1860 and spent her adult life in Northfield, the wife of an Irish-born farmer and the mother of a large family. Her obituary notice recorded that her house "was always of the old fashioned hospitable New England type."¹⁴⁴

NOTES

Except where specifically cited, all census references are to Northfield, Vermont.

¹ See William V. Shannon, *The American Irish* (New York: MacMillan, 1966); Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants, 1790-1865: A Study in Acculturation*, rev. ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1969); Earl F. Niehaus, *The Irish in New Orleans, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge, La: Louisiana State University Press, 1965); Dennis Clark, *The Irish in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973); and Jay P. Dolan, *The Immigrant Church: New York Irish and German Catholics, 1815-1865* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975).

² Walter Hill Crockett, *Vermont, The Green Mountain State*, V (New York: The Century History Company Inc., 1923), p. 495.

³ Charles Paine, "Memoirs," unpublished typescript copy in Vermont Historical Society, Montpelier, Vermont, p. 62.

⁴ Mason S. Stone, *History of Education, State of Vermont* (Montpelier, Vt: Capital City Press, 1935), pp. 58-59; and H. Nicholas Muller, III, and Samuel B. Hand, eds., *In A State of Nature: Readings in Vermont History* (Montpelier, Vt: Vermont Historical Society, 1982), p. 403.

⁵ *Excelsior*, October 12, 1854. Italics in the original. *Excelsior* was the student newspaper of Northfield Academy.

⁶ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Seventh Census*, 1850, and *Eighth Census*, 1880.

⁷ *Vermont Christian Messenger*, February 7, 1855.

⁸ Paine, "Memoirs," p. 46.

⁹ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Twelfth Census*, 1900.

¹⁰ Based on analysis of data taken from tombstone inscriptions at King Street cemetery, Northfield.

¹¹ Quoted in *Vermont Chronicle*, July 7, 1847.

¹² *Vermont Chronicle*, June 30, 1847.

¹³ Crockett, *Vermont*, V, p. 495; and James O'Beirne, "Some Early Irish in Vermont," *Vermont History* 28 (January, 1960): 67.

¹⁴ Katharine F. Duclose, *The History of Braintree, Vermont*, II (Montpelier, Vt: Capital City Press, 1976), p. 89.

¹⁵ *Vermont Chronicle*, July 21, 1847; and Evelyn M. Wood Lovejoy, *History of Royalton, Vermont* (Burlington, Vt: Free Press Printing Co., 1911), p. 368, 579.

¹⁶ Peter H. Haraty, et al. *Put the Vermonters Ahead: A History of the Vermont National Guard, 1764-1978* (Burlington, Vt: Queen City Printers, Inc., 1979), pp. 89-91; also, Jones family MS, Edward Jones to Milo Jones, Fort Atkinson, Wisc. Territory, July 17, 1846; and Edward Jones to Jabez Jones, Somers, Westchester County, N.Y., July 11, 1846 (MS Box 133), Vermont Historical Society.

¹⁷ *Sunday Rutland Herald and Times-Argus*, March 9, 1980.

¹⁸ *Burlington Free Press*, March 21, 1850; *Vermont Watchman and State Journal*, January 13, 1848, and May 11, 1848; *Vermont Chronicle*, February 16, 1848, and March 24, 1848.

¹⁹ *Vermont Chronicle*, December 1, 1847, May 24, 1848, and April 28, 1847.

²⁰ *Vermont Watchman and State Journal*, March 30, 1848.

²¹ *Vermont Christian Messenger*, April 30, 1859.

²² Evidence that many of Northfield's Irish came to Vermont relatively directly after debarking in the New World is found in U.S. Census records of children's places of birth. Typical were the families of Dennis and Ann Donahue, Mary Devine and her husband, and Morgan and Mary Doyle. The 1850 census showed that of the Donahues' five children, two were born in Ireland and three in Vermont; seven of the Devines' nine children in 1860 were Irish-born, the other two Vermont-born; and the Doyles listed three children in 1860, the first born in Ireland, the second and third in Vermont. Unrepresentative was the family of James and Catherine Waters, whose first child was born in Ireland, their second in Massachusetts, and their third in Vermont. U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Seventh Census*, 1850, and *Eighth Census*, 1860.

²³ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Seventh Census*, 1850.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ The shared surnames of many late nineteenth century Irish families in Northfield suggest that later migrants to the town were drawn there by relatives who were earlier migrants.

²⁶ The physical mobility of Northfield's native-born male work force also was high, although it did not match the Irish's. Thirty-eight percent of native male workers in 1850 remained in town at the end of the decade. Of the 572 native workers new to Northfield in the 1860 census, 24 percent remained ten years later. Of the 1870 group, 37 percent remained in 1880. In the state as a whole, approximately two of every five native Vermonters left in each decade, 1850-1900. Harold Fisher Wilson, *The Hill Country of Northern New England* (Montpelier, Vt: Vermont Historical Society, 1947), p. 103; and U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Seventh Census*, 1850, *Eighth Census*, 1860, *Ninth Census*, 1870, and *Tenth Census*, 1880.

²⁷ William R. Brock, *The United States, 1789-1890* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1975), pp. 73-74.

²⁸ *Northfield News*, May 16, 1911.

²⁹ *Northfield News*, September 11, 1894, November 2, 1933; and Northfield Town History Committee, *Green Mountain Heritage, the Chronicle of Northfield, Vermont* (Canaan, N.H.: Phoenix Publishing Co., 1974), p. 149.

³⁰ *Northfield News*, July 31, 1928, April 20, 1920; and U.S. Census, Stowe, Vermont, Manuscript Schedule I, *Sixth Census*, 1840.

³¹ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Seventh Census*, 1850, *Eighth Census*, 1860, *Tenth Census*, 1880, *Twelfth Census*, 1900; U.S. Census, Roxbury, Vermont, Manuscript Schedule I, *Tenth Census*, 1880; U.S. Census, Berlin, Vermont, Manuscript Schedule I, *Tenth Census*, 1880. By examining obituary notices published in the *Northfield News* in the period 1879-1920, it is possible to further trace the destinations of some of those who left. A total of ninety-three surviving relatives who formerly lived in Northfield were identified in this way. The findings showed that almost half settled in other Vermont towns, and almost one-fifth in other New England states. Roughly 15 percent had gone to states and territories in the west, and approximately 10 percent to middle Atlantic states and Washington, D.C. Only about 3 percent resided in southern states.

³² U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Eighth Census*, 1860.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Vermont Christian Messenger*, March 28, 1855. See also *Green Mountain Heritage*, pp. 193-94, for a "mystical story" concerning an Irish Catholic "servant girl" in the home of a prominent Northfield family.

³⁵ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Seventh Census*, 1850, *Eighth Census*, 1860, and *Ninth Census*, 1870.

³⁶ Town of Northfield, grand list, 1880. Of the fifty-two taxpayers whose grand lists exceeded twenty-five dollars in 1880, only two were Irish. *Northfield News*, May 20, 1880, and May 27, 1880.

³⁷ In the relationship of persistence to property ownership, a comparison of Irish workingmen and native unskilled workers is instructive. Approximately one-half of Irish workers who possessed property in the Irish group who appeared in the 1850 census (50 percent), and those Irish new to the censuses of 1860 (47 percent) and 1870 (50 percent) did not live in Northfield a decade later. The attrition rate for propertyless Irish workers in each of these census groups was far higher: 90 percent in the 1850 group; 72 percent in the 1860 group; and 73 percent in the 1870 group.

As for native unskilled workers, in each of the 1850, 1860, and 1870 census groups, the figures for workers who owned property but were no longer in Northfield ten years later were 13 percent in 1850, 54 percent in 1860, and 57 percent in 1870. For propertyless members of each of these census groups, the attrition figures ten years later were 75 percent in 1850, 82 percent in 1860, and 74 percent in 1870. In both categories, for the 1860 and 1870 groups, native attrition exceeded that of Irish newcomers. U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Seventh Census*, 1850, *Eighth Census*, 1860, *Ninth Census*, 1870.

³⁸ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Seventh Census*, 1850, *Eighth Census*, 1860, *Ninth Census*, 1870.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Arnold Schrier, *Ireland and the American Emigration, 1850-1900* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), p. 160; and *Northfield News*, March 28, 1879.

⁴² U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule 3, *Ninth Census*, 1870. The rate of exodus after ten years, for native farm families listed in the 1850 census, and native farm families new to the census in 1860, was almost 40 percent; for the 1870 census, slightly under one-third were gone from town after ten years. U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Seventh Census*, 1850, *Eighth Census*, 1860, *Ninth Census*, 1870, *Tenth Census*, 1880.

⁴³ The grand lists of 1880 and 1900 show that Irish farms seldom exceeded 150 acres of combined improved and unimproved agricultural land. Town of Northfield, grand list, 1880, 1900.

⁴⁴ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Twelfth Census*, 1900.

⁴⁵ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Seventh Census*, 1850, *Eighth Census*, 1860, *Ninth Census*, 1870.

⁴⁶ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Ninth Census*; and Town of Northfield, grand list, 1900.

⁴⁷ *Green Mountain Heritage*, p. 258.

⁴⁸ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Eighth Census*, 1860, *Ninth Census*, 1870, *Tenth Census*, 1880, *Twelfth Census*, 1900; *Northfield News*, July 21, 1908, June 22, 1909, November 13, 1912, and August 22, 1922; Town of Northfield, Land Records, 1885; and *Green Mountain Heritage*, pp. 149-50.

⁴⁹ Edward Wakin, *Enter the Irish-American* (New York: Thomas E. Crowell, Co., 1976), p. 62. In 1855 a Rutland newspaper editor wrote, "We know very well, that foreigners are not welcome in this state, particularly if they are Roman Catholics." *Rutland Herald*, February 2, 1855.

⁵⁰ Paine, "Memoirs," p. 94.

⁵¹ *Vermont Christian Messenger*, February 6, 1856.

⁵² *Ibid.*, May 31, 1854.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, August 3, 1853, April 5, 1854, May 30, 1855.

⁵⁴ Interview with Maxine McNamara, Northfield, Vermont, May 1981; and *Vermont Christian Messenger*, August 10, 1853.

⁵⁵ *Northfield News*, December 9, 1880.

⁵⁶ George W. Potter, *To the Golden Door: The Story of the Irish in Ireland and America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960), p. 594. Because there was no complete record of religious affiliations of Northfield's population, I have had to infer, in most instances, that Irish nativity, or Irish parental nativity meant Catholic religious affiliation, and in so doing may have erroneously included a few Irish Protestants in this category.

⁵⁷ *Green Mountain Heritage*, p. 189.

⁵⁸ Quoted in *Rutland Herald*, November 17, 1854. Also see *Vermont Christian Messenger*, October 25, 1854, for additional comment on *Star of Vermont's* Know-Nothing sentiment. For examples of its anti-Catholicism, see *Star of Vermont*, March 22, 1856, in Northfield Historical Society.

⁵⁹ *Vermont Christian Messenger*, September 13, 1854.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, May 23, 1855.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, February 6, 1856.

⁶² *Ibid.*, April 4, 1855.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, January 10, 1855.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, June 21, 1854.

⁶⁵ *Excelsior*, January 13, 1855. Italics in the original.

⁶⁶ *Vermont Patriot*, February 9, 1855.

⁶⁷ *Vermont Christian Messenger*, December 6, 1854.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, March 22, 1854.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, November 29, 1854.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, April 20, 1853. Also see September 27, 1854.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, April 6, 1853.

⁷² *Ibid.*, February 22, 1854.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, February 7, 1855.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, October 5, 1853, and February 7, 1855. Also see February 14, 1855.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, February 6, 1856.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, February 27, 1856.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, April 6, 1853, January 16, 1856; and *Green Mountain Heritage*, p. 176.

⁷⁸ *Star of Vermont*, March 22, 1856.

⁷⁹ *Vermont Christian Messenger*, May 4, 1853, and April 27, 1853.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, October 2, 1858.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, March 19, 1856. Also see *Star of Vermont*, March 22, 1856.

⁸² *Ibid.*, May 23, 1855.

⁸³ See W. W. Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975); Edward A. Sowles, "History of Fenianism and Fenian Raids in Vermont," *Proceedings of the Vermont Historical Society* (October 19, 1880), pp. 1-43; Homer Calkins, "St. Albans in Reverse: The Fenian Raid of 1866," *Vermont History* 35 (January 1967): pp. 19-34.

⁸⁴ *Burlington Times*, March 17, 1866.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, March 24, 1866.

⁸⁶ *Vermont Christian Messenger*, February 6, 1856.

⁸⁷ See, for example, Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants*, p. 211; Stephan Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress, Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), p. 174.

⁸⁸ *Green Mountain Heritage*, p. 190.

⁸⁹ Abby Maria Hemenway, *Vermont Historical Gazetteer* IV (Montpelier, Vt: Vermont Watchman and State Journal Press, 1882), pp. 699-704; John Gregory, *Centennial Proceedings and Historical Incidents of the Early Settlers of Northfield, VT.* (Montpelier, Vt: Argus and Patriot Book and Job Printing House, 1878), pp. 309-10.

⁹⁰ *Green Mountain Heritage*, 197-200.

⁹¹ George Ellsworth Hooker, "Labor and Life at the Barre Granite Quarries, A Brief Survey of Social Conditions on Millstone Hill, Barre, Vermont, in the Autumn of 1895," unpublished typescript copy in Aldrich Public Library, Barre, Vermont, p. 10.

⁹² Data from the 1890 census was not available.

⁹³ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Seventh Census*, 1850, *Eighth Census*, 1860, *Ninth Census*, 1870, *Tenth Census*, 1880, *Twelfth Census*, 1900.

⁹⁴ *Northfield News*, March 7, 1879.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, September 12, 1879. The first Irish-American teacher in a Northfield classroom seems to have been Mary O'Neil, who, at age sixteen, began teaching in 1872. In spite of a high turnover rate among the town's teachers, apparently it was not until the 1880s that other Irish-Americans gained positions as teachers.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, April 8, 1911.

⁹⁷ See, for example, *Northfield News*, June 21, 1893, April 23, 1895, April 30, 1895; Hassett, "While I Remember," unpublished typescript copy in possession of Julia McIntire, Northfield, Vermont, p. 23; *Green Mountain Heritage*, pp. 298-99.

⁹⁸ *Green Mountain Heritage*, p. 161; and Maxine McNamara, *Roman Catholicism in Northfield, Vermont, 1856-1977* (Barre, Vt: Northlight Studio Press, 1977), p. 35.

⁹⁹ The land itself had been given to the Catholic community of the town by the estate of Charles Paine, former Vermont governor and former president of the Vermont Central Railroad. *Green Mountain Heritage*, p. 162.

¹⁰⁰ Hemenway, *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, IV, p. 658; and *Green Mountain Heritage*, p. 183.

¹⁰¹ *Green Mountain Heritage*, p. 251.

¹⁰² John W. Walbridge, ed., *The Town of Slate, Northfield, Vermont* (Concord, N.H.: Rumford Press, 1903), p. 17.

¹⁰³ Gregory, *Northfield, Vt.*, p. 258.

¹⁰⁴ *Green Mountain Heritage*, p. 252.

¹⁰⁵ The *Star of Vermont* ceased publication in 1857; the *Vermont Christian Messenger* shifted its publication to Montpelier in November 1859.

¹⁰⁶ *Northfield News*, March 19, 1890, March 23, 1892, March 22, 1893, January 16, 1894, and March 20, 1894.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in *Green Mountain Heritage*, p. 210.

¹⁰⁸ Town of Northfield, grand list, 1880; U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Tenth Census*, 1880.

¹⁰⁹ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Twelfth Census*, 1900.

¹¹⁰ Annual catalog of Northfield Graded School, 1874. Education beyond high school was even more difficult. Norwich University moved its campus to Northfield in 1867, and from that year to the end of the century, the town provided approximately one-fourth of all the university's students; yet less than one percent of the cadets from Northfield came from local Irish families. William Arba Ellis, ed., *Norwich University, 1819-1911*, III (Montpelier, Vt: Capital City Press, 1911), pp. 97-514.

¹¹¹ Town of Northfield, report of overseer of the poor, 1861-March 1862, and March 1862-March 1863.

¹¹² There is no evidence that Northfield followed the practice of the town fathers of Royalton, where "foreign paupers were encouraged to leave." Lovejoy, *History of Royalton*, p. 368. In fact, Northfield's overseer of the poor, in 1862-63, recorded two incidents of providing overnight aid to transient "Irishmen." Town of Northfield, report of overseer of the poor, March 1862-March 1863.

¹¹³ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Tenth Census*, 1880.

¹¹⁴ Town of Northfield, report of overseer of the poor, 1880.

¹¹⁵ *Northfield News*, December 22, 1896; and McNamara, *Roman Catholicism in Northfield*, p. 15.

¹¹⁶ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Seventh Census*, 1850, *Eighth Census*, 1860, *Twelfth Census*, 1900; and *Northfield News*, July 31, 1928, December 22, 1896; and *Green Mountain Heritage*, p. 384, p. 484.

¹¹⁷ For Moriarity, see *Northfield News*, December 22, 1896, April 14, 1914, March 10, 1914; *Green Mountain Heritage*, p. 377, p. 486, p. 405, p. 384; and U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Tenth Census*, 1880, *Twelfth Census*, 1900. For Harrigan, see U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Ninth Census*, 1870; *Tenth Census*, 1880; *Twelfth Census*, 1900; and *Green Mountain Heritage*, p. 150, p. 461. For J. C. Donahue, see U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Seventh Census*, 1850, *Eighth Census*, 1860, *Ninth Census*, 1870, *Tenth Census*, 1880, *Twelfth Census*, 1900; *Northfield News*, August 11, 1896, June 25, 1918, December 22, 1896; *Green Mountain Heritage*, pp. 283-84, p. 485; W. D. Hassett, "While I Remember," p. 13.

¹¹⁸ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Ninth Census*, 1870, *Twelfth Census*, 1900; *Northfield News*, December 21, 1926; *Green Mountain Heritage*, p. 387.

¹¹⁹ *Northfield News*, June 25, 1918.

¹²⁰ Town records list only about fifty Irish men as having taken the freeman's oath in the period 1845-1888. Lists for the years 1855, 1867, 1871-75, 1877, 1881, and 1883-87 were not available.

¹²¹ Town of Northfield, Record of Town Proceedings, 1845-1900.

¹²² Town of Northfield, Record of Village Proceedings, 1855-1900.

¹²³ R. L. Duffus, *The Waterbury Record* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1959), p. 87.

¹²⁴ *Northfield News*, December 27, 1893.

¹²⁵ Adelphi Society of Montpelier Seminary, Minutes of Meeting, October 21, 1884, Vermont College Archives; R. L. Duffus, *Williamstown Branch* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1958), pp. 113-16; and Hooker, "Barre Granite Quarries," p. 10.

¹²⁶ Adelphi Society of Montpelier Seminary, Minutes of Meeting, April 26, 1875, November 16, 1874, October 21, 1884, Vermont College Archives; and Luther B. Johnson, *Eighty Years of It, 1869-1949* (Randolph, Vt: Haggett Press, 1949), pp. 126-27.

¹²⁷ T. D. Seymour Basset, "The 1870 Campaign for Woman Suffrage in Vermont," *Vermont Quarterly* 14 (April 1946): pp. 55-56.

¹²⁸ Johnson, *Eighty Years of It*, p. 40.

¹²⁹ Hassett, "While I Remember," p. 30. The student editor was W. D. Hassett who later served for seventeen years in Washington, D. C., as a press secretary to presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman.

¹³⁰ *Green Mountain Heritage*, p. 322.

¹³¹ *Northfield News*, July 1, 1880, May 9, 1879, and July 25, 1879.

¹³² *Ibid.*, November 7, 1879, November 14, 1879, and December 12, 1879.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, April 19, 1882.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, December 22, 1896.

¹³⁵ Town of Northfield, reports of justices of the peace, 1869-1900.

¹³⁶ *Northfield News*, November 7, 1879.

¹³⁷ *Green Mountain Heritage*, p. 59.

¹³⁸ *Northfield News*, June 10, 1891.

¹³⁹ See, for example, *Northfield News*, June 6, 1905.

¹⁴⁰ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Twelfth Census*, 1900.

¹⁴¹ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule I, *Tenth Census*, 1880, *Twelfth Census*, 1900.

¹⁴² See, for example, *Rutland Herald*, February 2, 1855, March 16, 1855; and Wilson, *Hill Country*, pp. 159-61.

¹⁴³ *Vermont Christian Messenger*, July 20, 1853.

¹⁴⁴ *Northfield News*, March 3, 1914.