The Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal: Ethno-religious Realignment in a Nineteenth-Century National Society

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Abstract

This study explores the effects of ethno-religious tensions on the dynamics of fraternalism in nineteenth-century Montreal. With the Irish "national society" as its focus, it relates the internal politics of the Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal to broader narratives of the cultural, intellectual and institutional evolution of civil society in Lower Canada. Beginning with an overview of sources and a discussion of early Irish migration, it proceeds to explore the effects of emerging social and political patterns and ethno-religious identities on a middle-class fraternal project from the early nineteenth-century to the dissolution of the Saint Patrick's Society in 1856.

Abstrait

Cette dissertation examine les effets des tensions ethno-religieuses sur les dynamiques fraternelles à Montréal au dix-neuvième siècle. Employant l'exemple de la Société de Saint-Patrice, cette dissertation vise à lier les politiques internes d'une société nationale à l'évolution culturelle, intellectuelle et institutionelle de la société civile à Bas-Canada. En commençant avec une synthèse des sources, on analyze les effets des identités ethno-religieuses et des tendances sociales et politiques qui se réalisaient sur un projet bourgeois jusqu'à la dissolution de la société en 1856.

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Contents

Introduction

On Saint Patrick's Day, March 17th, 1834, Montreal's leading Irish citizens were convened at McCabe's Inn by Doctor Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan, a Montreal physician and reform agitator, editor of the *Vindicator*--a stridently pro-*patriote* broadsheet--and lieutenant of *patriote* leader Louis-Joseph Papineau. That evening, prominent reformers in the Irish community enjoyed a "most excellent and abundant dinner" in the presence of O'Callaghan and the *patriote* deputy Auguste-Norbert Morin[1]. A toast was proposed to "Ireland as she ought to be--great, glorious and free", whereupon the assembled guests joined in singing "Let Erin Remember the Days of Old". Toasts followed, in succession, to "The King", "O'Connell and the Repeal of Union", "Shiel, and the Patriotic Orator of Ireland", "The Land We Live In", "Papineau" (followed by a rendition of 'The Pilot That Weathered The Storm'), "Union among the Irish and Canadians", "The Bishop and Clergy of the Catholic Church", and respects were then paid to two prominent Irish Canadian reformers, Jocelyn Waller and Daniel Tracy. Tributes were proposed to "Dr. MacNevern and the Friends of Ireland" and "Barrett and the liberal press all over the world". The final toast at this all-male affair was offered to "The Fair Sex"[2].

Following the formalities, the assembled guests rose to propose personal tributes to a wide variety of causes, including Papineau's Ninety-two Resolutions, The Harp Society of Belfast, and even to O'Callaghan himself, with the newspaper editor Ludger Duvernay "and the liberal press" who were fomenting against the colonial government of the day. This affair, held on the feast day of Ireland's patron saint, was a meeting of the *patriote* Irish and they self-consciously allied themselves politically and rhetorically with

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[1]the proceedings of this dinner were documented in the *Gazette*, March 18, 1834.
[2]Ibid.

French-Canadian liberals in support of broader political and cultural projects in both Ireland and Lower Canada: Repeal of the Union and the advancement of Papineau's Ninety-two Resolutions. To men such as O'Callaghan, Repeal was paralleled by the *patriote* programme of political reform--both seen as valiant struggles against the tyranny of British colonial rule. But *patriotes* did not claim a monopoly on the politics of Irish Montreal--O'Callaghan notwithstanding, many of Montreal's Irish leaders were of a decidedly more conservative stripe, and in the ethnic and political constellation of the day, they placed themselves squarely in defence of civil order and institutions. These men took the stage on Saint Patrick's Day the following year, at a dinner held at Patrick Sword's Hotel under the aegis of the Catholic conservative Michael O'Sullivan, later Chief Justice of Montreal[3].

In marked contrast to the previous year's dinner, the 1835 event boasted a guest list of the Irish community's Tories, including John Donnellan, who would contest a seat in Montreal West against the *patriotes* in a coming election and serve as first president of the Saint Patrick's Society. Toasts on this occasion were offered to the King, The Queen and the Royal Family, the Army, the Navy, "Ireland, the land of our faiths. May unity exist among her sons of all classes and of all creeds", and to Lord and Lady Aylmer, the colonial governor and his wife. This was the first official celebration of the feast of Ireland's patron saint held under the aegis of the new "Saint Patrick's Society". Less than a month after the Saint Patrick's Day celebrations a year earlier, several prominent Irish Montrealers met to establish a permanent national Committee[4]. The founding of the Saint Patrick's Society marked the beginning of Montreal's first officially-constituted "national society". It was joined in short order by a number of similar ethnic fraternal organisations: the Saint George's Society for Montreal's Englishmen, the Saint Andrew's Society for its Scottish residents, the German Society, and, later clubs for

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[3]John Loye. "Saint Patrick's Day in Montreal, 1835". *The Gazette*, March 16, 1934.
[4] Ibid.

Welsh, American, and Cornish immigrants and their descendants. These "national societies" shared the rhetoric of race and ethnicity, common objectives--largely social and philanthropic activities as well as some mutual benefit projects--and also a generally conservative cultural and political orientation. They were to become the principal vehicles through which the middling classes negotiated the structures and meanings of civil society and were integrated into the culture and practices of public politics. A notable exception to the conservative orientation of early nineteenth-century bourgeois fraternalism was the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste; with strong ties to political reform movements, it was home to many of the more strident liberals in the Montreal Irish community, including Edmund Barry O'Callaghan. Indeed, the very night that the members of the Saint Patrick's Society dined in Patrick Sword's Hotel at their inaugural feast, a smaller group of Irish Montrealers met with French Canadian reformers, including Ludger Duvernay, across the town at the Château de Ramezay. They resolved henceforth to celebrate the Feast of their patron saint outside the aegis of the Saint Patrick's Society and without Montreal's Irish Tories.

Over the course of the next twenty-two years, meetings of the Saint Patrick's Society would prove less congenial than its annual dinners. Members would witness bitter debate and political division, and conflict over the Society's mandates would finally lead, in 1856, to the dissolution of the Society itself. For even though, over the course of its first two decades, the Saint Patrick's Society described itself as a "national society", it was frequently divided over the character of the national constituency which it claimed to represent. At its outset, the Society was a vanguard movement of Montreal's civil leaders and *haute bourgeoisie*-- essentially conservative in orientation, non-confessional in mandate and elite in composition. Its project was the preservation of civil order in the face of reformist pressure, and in this cause it was closely allied with the Saint Andrew's, Saint George's and German Societies. But by the 1850s, waves of Irish

Catholic immigrants were transforming the complexion of Irish Montreal, Catholic ultramontanism was in ascendancy, sectarian tensions were mounting, and the *patriote* threat receding. The Irish Catholic clergy and leading Catholic members of the Irish middle classes came to see the Society as a vehicle for the realisation of a very different notion of civic identity--one in which confessional and political loyalties were deeply intertwined. The Saint Patrick's Society at its founding dinner and the Catholic Society of the post-1856 period represented two markedly different ethnic subjectivities, and the Society's metamorphosis over twenty-two years demonstrated the extent to which the rhetorical playing ground of Irish ethnicity had been transformed by a changing demographic, intellectual and cultural environment: it also bespoke the shifting nature of civic identities.

The first chapter of this study outlines the generally thin historiography of Montreal's Irish; the second provides an overview of the demographics of Irish settlement in the early nineteenth century. The third chapter situates the Saint Patrick's Society within the constellation of nineteenth-century clubs, evaluating it as a vehicle through which communal identities were maintained, ordered and expressed in the face of cultural, social and economic pressures. Mutual aid was a characteristic provision in many nineteenth-century clubs and associations: the Saint Patrick's Society, however, was nearly torn asunder in the late 1840s over proposals to expand its mutual aid role, and its relative failure in this arena of communal action was an important symptom of its weakness in uniting disparate elements of the Irish community in Montreal.

By mid-century, Catholic ultramontanism proposed a totalising ideological framework within which communities could constitute and regulate their daily activities, but the Church alone could not coax communities into the embrace of Pius IX. The fourth chapter of this study explores how ultramontanism became an instrument through which communities expressed confessional loyalty, separateness--and alienation--from

dominant institutions, and also a "demographic consciousness" of the Irish ethnic category grounded in ethno-religious identities. It is no coincidence that nineteenth-century ultramontanism found resonance in places where the totalising framework of Catholicism could be constructed as an alternative to the communitarian ideology and institutional apparatus of the civil state. This was true in Lower Canada, where ultramontanism provided an instrument through which French Canada asserted its separateness by placing a premium on values and institutions contrary to those of British civic culture. But because ultramontanism in French Canada functioned primarily as a vehicle of ethnic persistence, its institutional and civic space was limited to the French Canadian ethnie. With a sizeable Irish Catholic cohort, the Irish clerics in the colony acted in communicative isolation from the French Church, and gave nineteenth-century English Canadian ultramontanism a decidedly Irish accent. By mid-century, two ethnic subjectivities--one French and one Irish--developed within the bosom of the universal church in Lower Canada, each fashioning a distinctive civic identity.

Robert Klaus, in his study The Pope, the Protestants, and the Irish[5], sees the strong no-Popery movement in Victorian Britain as having sought to resolve the crisis of English Protestantism by providing both a unitive ideology and a concrete, common enemy--the so-called "Papal Aggression"--against which frequently quarrelling and dispirited Protestant political and religious leaders could direct a multitude of "class, ethnic and religious discontents"[6]. The fifth chapter of this study explores the role of religious revivals and revivalists in formulating and reflecting such ethno-religious identities. While Klaus's argument is persuasive, and the anti-Catholic movement in Lower Canada often mirrored its British counterpart, especially in the instruments of its dissemination: the press, the pamphleteers, and "quasi-religious and patriotic

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[5]Robert Klaus, The Pope, the Protestants and the Irish: Papal Aggression and Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Nineteenth Century Britain, (New York, 1987).
[6]Ibid., see especially chapter III, "Protestants and Protestantism, 1840-50", pp. 117-170

organisations"[7], by narrowly focusing on the functions of Anti-Popery, one tends to understate the role of the Catholic community in developing new ethnic categorisations. The negotiation of ethnic boundaries involves a dialogue of classifier and classified, and can rarely be seen as a purely ascriptive process. As Frederik Barth noted in his seminal study of ethnicity, the critical focus of inquiry into regulators of inter- and internal ethnic interaction is the boundary of the ethnie: the shifting line drawn between communities which itself "defines the group, not the cultural stuff it encloses"[8]. Against the Protestant charge of "Papal Aggression", Catholics counterpoised their own imaginative rhetorical creation: the "Protestant Ascendancy". Like the "Papal Aggression", it was a symbolic standard around which the ethnic Catholic Churches rallied their disparate troops, fashioned new subjectivities and confessional cosmologies, and drew lines between the self and the other. Chapter five of this study evaluates the "Papal Aggression" and "Protestant Ascendancy" as broad cultural themes in mid-nineteenth century Montreal, and suggests how they animated its social and political dynamics. The sixth and final chapter of this study shows how the cumulative effects of social and cultural realignment played out in the ranks of the Saint Patrick's Society.

In order to proceed with an analysis of nineteenth-century ethnicity, it is helpful to reflect on methodological and theoretical tools that may be set to the task of analysing those most elusive of themes: ethnic and civic identity. The negotiation of identity relies on processes of both objective and subjective identification, based on dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. The key articulators of the boundaries of that dichotomy depend heavily on creating a sense of "mutuality"--a precept which must be accepted by the defined constituency in order to cement the legitimacy of the articulators.[9] In order to

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[7]Ibid., p. 245

[8]Frederik Barth, Ethnic Groups and Boundaries, (Boston, 1969), p. 15.

[9]for a sophisticated discussion of this theme, see Anthony P. Cohen, "Of Symbols and Boundaries, or, Does Ertie's Greatcoat Hold the Key?" in Symbolising Boundaries: Identity and Diversity in British Cultures, (Manchester, 1986), pp. 1-19.

resonate, ethnic categories must respond to, and correspond with, broader cultural currents and material exigencies. Above all, ethnicity is sensitive to context--"situational"--its content mutable, its markers sometimes vague, and its boundaries tentative at best. Changes in the over-arching "culture structure", which provides the schema for discretely-ordered sub-units to elaborate themselves, pressures boundaries in one direction or the other: they are never static, and are frequently unstable, but they are characterised by a tendency towards homologous constitution and also towards concomitant changes in the perception of historical "population" groups as infrastructural to the ethnic categories.

While this paper borrows a number of interpretative tools from historians of the middle class and students of nineteenth century social and economic history, it is notably indebted to the concept of "taxonomic space" conceived of, and elaborated by, the late British anthropologist Edwin Ardener[10]. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Ardener was among the pioneers of the "linguistic turn" in the social sciences. In his writings from this period, Ardener questioned the dominant classification system which imagined "populations" as being realties infrastructural to language and ethnic categories.[11] Ardener argued that the processes of categorisation occupied a position between the subjectivity of the classifier and the classified, and he remarked, in his study of the Bantu, on the tendency among defined categories of people to co-opt and "over-determine" the characteristics of their community along the axis of external classification. The manner in which arbitrary systems of categorisation give life to "real communities" led Ardener to develop the concept of "taxonomic space", within which communities are prescribed, imagined, conceived, and constituted. He enumerated the characteristics of ethnic

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[10]Two of Ardener's most influential studies employing the theory of taxonomic space form part of Malcolm Chapman's edited collection The Voice of Prophecy and Other Essays, (Oxford, 1989): "Language, Ethnicity and Population", pp. 65-71; and "Social Anthropology and Population", pp. 109-126"

[11]in Chapman, p.65.

categorisation as follows:

> 1. The ethnic classification is a reflex of self-identification.
> 2. Onomastic (or naming) propensities are closely involved in this, and thus have more than a purely linguistic interest.
> 3. Identification by others is an important feature of self-identification.
> 4. The taxonomic space in which self-identification occurs is of over-riding importance.
> 5. The effect of foreign classification, scientific and lay, is far from neutral in the establishment of such a space.[12]

These theoretical insights are helpful to the student of Irish ethnicity, particularly in tracing the remarkable mutations in Irish ethnic categories by the mid-nineteenth century which realigned the subjectivities of many original constituents. Ardener's insights into the processes of ethnic classification illuminate the Irish ethnic category as a dynamic of social, economic and intellectual situations, suggesting that it exists in "demographic consciousness" outside a purely empirically-derived demographic cohort. This paper argues that Irish ethnicity existed as a "hollow category" susceptible to situational modification and variously constituted according to social exigency.

Ethnic identity is part of a dialectic between the "historical actor" and what Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney describes as "the structure of culture"[13]. Ethnic identities are not self-constituted, for it is the ethnic boundary which is the crucial content of the ethnic identity and around which community consciousness develops. The structure of culture is that combination of cultural dispositions--material and symbolic--which provide both an interpretative framework and an important schema for action which privileges the boundaries and characteristics of infrastructural communal identities. Analysis of demographic influences and cultural factors, including Anti-Popery and Irish ultramontanism, show how a changing taxonomic space acted upon ethnic categories in general, and on the Saint Patrick's Society in particular. The advantage of "taxonomic

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[12]Ibid, p. 68.
[13]Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney (ed.), Culture Through Time: Anthropological Approaches, (Stanford, 1990), p. 15.

space" as an analytical tool is that it shows the mediation of ethnic boundaries, frequently interpreted in strictly materialist terms, by symbolic and ideological factors. The concept of taxonomic space can also allow us to move beyond looking at the colonial situation in isolation and instead examine a wide range of imported influences--English Anti-Popery, Irish clericalism--which intermingled with demographic and institutional circumstances peculiar to nineteenth-century Montreal, creating a climate unique in many respects but also not wholly independent of these external influences.

Other analytical tools borrowed from the social sciences which can prove to be of considerable use to the student of nineteenth-century British North American fraternalism are the related concepts of civil society and civic identity. Many scholars have noted the fundamental importance of associational life, especially bourgeois fraternalism, in the elaboration of civil society: "that set of non-governmental institutions", as Ernest Gellner describes it, "which is strong enough to counter-balance the state", and which represents space free of the much more prescriptive relationships proposed by the family[14]. The space within which these free associations took shape forms an important part in the narrative of civil society and bespeaks the centrality of the processes and varieties of collective identities in the supposedly individualistic middle class culture of the nineteenth century. The other valuable tool in the analysis of bourgeois associational culture is that of civic identity--an appeal to ancient and purportedly un-contested communitarian ideals which became embedded in the structure, words and deeds of the fraternal organisations which proposed both means of collective *action* and principles of collective *virtues*. The centrality of the rhetoric of civic virtue--and the societies' claims on monopoly of its expression--were institutionalised within the structures of the societies themselves, so that, as Jonathan Barry has noted, even infirmaries, in an appeal

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[14]see Ernest Gellner, "The Importance of Being Modular", in John Hall (ed.) Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995), pp.32-55.

to civic tradition and its trappings, established annual processions, dinners and rituals[15]. The appeal to civic tradition also had the effect of placing institutions in direct conflict with each other, with each claiming to be the repository of universal communitarian values: this became apparent in the Montreal Saint Patrick's Society's open conflict with *patriote* clubs, and, later, competing Protestant associations. In these protracted battles, the central debate revolved around which organisation had the authority to represent a "self-evident series" of civic values, and thereby attribute to its detractors the motivation of deceit, self-interest or subversion[16].

An operative element of community regulation is perceptual identity: a sense of perceived mutuality which can prove to be remarkably elastic. When, after twenty-two years as a non-sectarian organisation, the Saint Patrick's Society was confessionalised, it was in an effort to establish and create a new framework of perceptual identity: new categories of community, of "us" and the "other", which corresponded to the exigencies of an evolving taxonomic space and the changing structures of civil society. The new categories internalised the projects and polemics of the press and pamphleteers and reflected new authorities and social possibilities; they challenged the enfeebled civic subjectivity which had been the Society's foundation, and supplanted a weakened Irish "national" category around which the Saint Patrick's Society had originally been constituted.

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[15]Jonathan Barry, "Bourgeois Collectivism? Urban Association and the Middling Sort", in J. Barry and Christopher Brooks (eds.) The Middling People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550-1800, (London, The Macmillan Press, 1994), p. 99.
[16]Ibid., p 111.

I: Montreal's Irish: Issues and Sources

While the historiography of the nineteenth-century Irish in Montreal is thin compared to its Upper Canadian and Maritime counterparts, the wealth of scattered, unexploited primary material will provide a rich foundation for further research. This study draws on disparate primary material, including the published Minutes of the Saint Patrick's Society and the personal letters of the chaplains of the Society deposited at the Archives of Saint Patrick's Basilica in Montreal and the Archives of the Archdiocese of Montreal. Reports of meetings of the Irish Protestant Benevolent Association, one of the two institutions which proceeded from the disbanded Saint Patrick's Society in 1856, have also been invaluable sources for reconstructing the cultural sensibilities of mid-nineteenth-century ethno-religious institutional privatism. The Montreal Municipal Archives also houses an important collection of press clippings from the twentieth century which includes some earlier material.

In support of my study of middle-class ethnic subjectivity, I draw on the recently-uncovered Bartholomew O'Brien papers deposited at the McCord Museum of Canadian History in Montreal. The English-language press in nineteenth-century Quebec was especially dynamic, and the debates carried out in the pages of Montreal's papers reflected a vibrant public culture and a broad array of social, cultural and religious tensions of the time. Press clippings from the era include the *Gazette*, the *Montreal Transcript*, the *Montreal Herald*, the *Times*, the *Morning Courier*, the *Vindicator*, *La Minerve*, the *Witness*, the *Montreal Post*, and the *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, the leading Catholic broadsheet of the period. As a public organisation, many of the Saint Patrick's Society's proceedings were published in the *True Witness*; these and other press reports are the most important extant sources of the Saint Patrick Society's

activities in its early years, as the Society's minutebooks and records from that period were lost in the fire which claimed their hall in the late nineteenth century.

The history of the Irish Catholic congregation, originally written for the celebration of the Saint Patrick Church's seventy-fifth anniversary, complements the somewhat insubstantial secondary literature on this topic and offers the most detailed, if anecdotal, synthesis of the Irish Catholic cohort in early Lower Canada. The secondary literature has been characterised by a rather scattered approach to the study of the diaspora in Montreal: no one has yet done for the Montreal Irish what D.H. Akenson has done for their compatriots in nineteenth-century Ontario: that is, taken a systematic approach to the migration patterns and a detached and critical view of the myths which have taken shape around it. Nor has anyone developed a thorough problematique of methods and sources in the study of the Montreal diaspora. It is this lack of rigorous methodological critique, and the proliferation of more localised, non-academic studies of the Irish Catholic community in Montreal, which account for the still-powerful sway of the old Famine narrative in localised studies of the Quebec Irish. They are premised on a correlation of Irishness and Catholicism which has become so infrastructural to population studies of Irish migration that the narrative of the Lower Canadian Irish has been almost entirely subsumed within the narrative of Montreal's emerging English-speaking Catholic community.

With the exception of C.J. Houston and W.J. Smyth[1], who provide an important general synthesis of Irish migration patterns, but not a particularly thorough analysis of Montreal, the most extensive study of Irish migration patterns to date is the nearly fifty-year old Master's thesis of George Keep, although it is largely concerned with Famine migration[2]. Similarly, in the area of Irish community associations, the most

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[1]Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, Emigration and Canadian Settlement: Patterns, Links, and Letters, (Toronto, 1990).

[2]George Rex Crowley Keep, The Irish Migration to Montreal, (unpublished M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1948).

comprehensive study is Dorothy Cross's Master's thesis, written in 1967, and dealing largely with the post-Confederation period[3]. Cross's discussion of the Saint Patrick's Society is almost wholly reliant on newspaper articles from the *Post*, with which the Society was frequently in open conflict. Daniel Lyne, in 1960, produced another broad study of "The Irish in the Province of Canada in the Decade Leading to Confederation"[4]; Lyne's contribution to the literature on the nineteenth-century Irish is valuable because of its focus on both Catholic and Protestant populations and their shared and separate institutions, but its ambitions as a synthesis of the Irish-Canadian experience preclude detailed discussion of particular institutions.

Montreal's Irish have yet to attract extensive academic interest, but there is, as in the case of the Quebec community, a long tradition of non-academic writing in the area, notably by T.P. Slattery and Donald MacKay[5]. While their works have helped to unearth important primary sources, they have been written within the context of amateur historical inquiry. They tend, therefore, to accept a priori the division of the associational network of the nineteenth century Irish: seeing the Protestant-Catholic divide as a kind of natural division, they tend to recount institutions and sensibilities, without accounting for their genesis. This is a deficit which students of the social sciences will see as an opportunity for more focused investigation.

Edgar Andrew Collard, in The Irish Way:[6], a largely anecdotal work commissioned by the Irish Protestant Benevolent Society, begins his narrative with the Protestant Society's founding; he makes passing reference to the first Saint Patrick's

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[3]Dorothy Suzanne Cross, "The Irish in Montreal, 1867-1896", (unpublished M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1969).
[4]Daniel C. Lyne, "The Irish in the Province of Canada in the Decade Leading to Confederation", (unpublished M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1960)
[5]T.P. Slattery, The Assassination of D.Arcy McGee, (Toronto, 1968) and Donald MacKay, Flight from Famine: The Coming of the Irish to Canada, (Toronto, 1990).
[6]Edward Andrew Collard, The Irish Way: The History of the Irish Protestant Benevolent Association, (Montreal, 1992).

Society, from which its membership was largely derived. I aim, in some measure, to correct this oversight by arguing that the Saint Patrick's Society and the Irish Protestant Benevolent Society were born of a dynamic cultural process which gave life to other confessionally-based community organisations in nineteenth-century Montreal, and cannot be looked at in institutional isolation. A historian has yet to examine in a sustained and holistic way the large network of ethno-religiously-based Montreal Irish societies which developed and flourished in the 1800s--everything from the Saint Patrick's Total Abstinence Society to the Saint Patrick's band--bringing the same salutary treatment to Montreal's Irish Catholics that Brian Clarke and Murray Nicolson have afforded their compatriots in nineteenth-century Toronto, although Roslyn Trigger is currently undertaking a broadly-based study of parish-based associational life in the latter half of the nineteenth century which promises to serve as a corrective to this paucity of research[7]. Brian Clarke's work on the broad associational network which was the institutional bulwark of Irish Catholic identity in Victorian Toronto provides many important conceptual tools for this essay: most obviously, the way he sees the relationship between church and community crystallised through parish-based confraternities, and relates the ultramontane ascendancy of the period--an essentially intellectual phenomenon--to the practical process of immigrant community-building. But both Clarke and Nicolson limit the scope of their studies to the development of Catholic institutions: this paper aims to show that it was not only a new Catholic institution--the confessionalised Saint Patrick's Society--which was created and elaborated in the mid-nineteenth century, but a new set of ethno-religious categories and boundaries as well, from which one "national society" gave birth to two by mid-century.

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[7]see Brian P. Clarke, Piety and Nationalism: Lay Voluntary Associations and the Creation of an Irish Catholic Community in Toronto, 1850-1895, (Montreal, 1993), and Murray Nicolson, "Irish Tridentine Catholicism in Victorian Toronto: Vesssel for Ethno-Religious Persistence", Canadian Catholic Historical Association, *Study Sessions*, 50 (1983), pp. 415-436,

Any treatment of the Irish in Montreal must also account for important demographic and cultural differences with the Upper Canada diaspora. Whereas in Upper Canada, even after the Famine immigration, Irish Protestants out-numbered their Catholic compatriots two-to-one, the opposite was true in Lower Canada. Also, as Houston and Smyth have noted, the essentially rural pattern of Upper Canadian Irish migration was not duplicated in the French-speaking colony. There, Irish migrants were highly concentrated in the two principal cities, Quebec and Montreal[8]. In Montreal, the Irish Catholic community, unlike its Toronto counterpart, formed part of the confessional majority. If Toronto was the New World Belfast, the same could certainly not be said of Montreal. And if ultramontanism was an important ingredient in the ethno-religious dynamic of Upper Canada, creating an institutional basis for ethno-religious privatism within a dominant Anglo-Protestant and Orange civic culture, Montreal provides us with a test case for assessing whether or not varieties--*ethnic* varieties--of ultramontanism could develop within the bosom of one church which embraced two dominant ethno-religious communities.

In addition to these important differences, which make the application of Brian Clarke's model to Montreal somewhat problematic, the scope of Clarke's study, namely Catholic institution-building within the framework of ultramontanism, tends to neglect the vibrant character of nineteenth-century associational life. In the space for voluntarism afforded by the emerging structures of civil society, everyone, from Caledonians to liberal francophones to Montreal New Englanders and Freemasons, from towns in Western Ontario to cities in the Maritime colonies, was coalescing around, and creating and expressing community through, a wide range of clubs and associations, giving life in the space of a few decades to an array of papers, clubs and societies. Club-subscription, society-founding, and institution-building were not merely unique aspects

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[8]Houston and Smyth, p. 210.

of Irish-Catholic culture: they were broadly characteristic of civil society--and especially of male, urban middle-class culture--on a wider scale, with important parallels in the United States and the United Kingdom. The reasons behind this pattern will be discussed in the third chapter of this study, but the association-building phenomenon in all three theatres suggests common social economic processes at work--processes which had important implications in the elaboration of civil society on a world-historical scale.

In his 1877 study The Irishman in Canada, Nicholas Flood Davin noted that William Workman, an Irish Protestant who had immigrated to Montreal in 1829, was a former President of the Saint Patrick's Society "when that Society was composed of Catholics and Protestants", as well as President of the Protestant House of Industry and Refuge, of the Montreal Dispensary, of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and of the Western Hospital[9]. Men such as Workman were also the bulwark of many nineteenth-century fraternal orders, including the Freemasons, the Oddfellows, and the Orange Order, all of which were very active in Montreal by mid-century. John Bodnar has underscored the importance of such societies to the immigrant middle classes, and R.J. Morris and P.H.J.H. Gosden have taken a broader view of associational culture, seeing it as a hallmark of the developing economic system and political culture of nineteenth-century society.

In addition to the many deficits in the historiography of the Montreal Irish, there is an inter-related problem of sources: as yet, there is no definitive bibliography of sources available, although Robert Grace made significant progress in this direction with his 1992 publication[10], which lamentably provides no discussion of archival material. Of course, it is because the Montreal Irish have been largely over-looked by the academy that archival material is so widely dispersed, literature on the topic so lacking, and

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[9]reprinted as Nicholas F. Davin, The Irishman in Canada,(Shannon, 1969), p. 335.
[10]Robert J. Grace, The Irish in Quebec: An Introduction to the Historiography, (Montreal, Culture, 1993).

systematic study so wanting. The most thorough study of the Montreal Irish to date has appeared in Robert Daley's 1986 Ph.D thesis "Edmund Barry O'Callaghan: Irish *Patriote*", and William M. Nolte's "The Irish in Canada, 1815-1867", a doctoral dissertation at the University of Michigan written in 1975. But beyond laying out the basic character of migration, neither of these studies seizes the opportunity to make the Irish and their many institutions test-cases for theoretical inquiries on the nature of ethnic identity and associational life, or as elements in the broader narrative of commercial and capitalist transformation and the processes of civil society.

The happy corollary of the rather patchy state of the historiography is that the early Montreal Irish represent a rich and largely un-tapped area of study; works such as this may represent the very first treatment of whole institutions and communities of the diaspora, using documents never before seen or incorporated into an academic study. This paucity of research, as much as the fluctuating boundaries of the Irish category and identity and the localised body of research which begs a broader narrative, adds to the allure of Montreal's Irish and makes constructing the story of their societies an engaging and frustrating task.

II: A "National" Divide: Montreal's Irish and the Politics of Colonial Society

At its inception on Saint Patrick's day, 1834, the Saint Patrick's Society was declared a "national society" open to "all Irishmen" , irrespective of religion. The implicit criterion for membership at this time was class, and the men who assembled for the Society's founding were an impressive lot, representing the high and middling echelons of capital and civil power; among those who served as the Society's presidents in its first two decades were the Tory stalwart James Donnellan (1834-'35), banker and businessman Benjamin Holmes (1836-'38), William Workman, a mayor of Montreal (1844), Francis Hincks, a future prime minister of the united Canadas (1845-48) and the prominent Tory Legislative Councillor Thomas Ryan (1852-'52)[1]. Members of the Irish community were well-established in 1830s Montreal, and beyond the Lachine canal, where Irish workers laboured and lived, more prosperous compatriots moved comfortably within the nascent finance and merchant sectors, attaining prominence in middle-class social circles and institutions. By the 1820s, Montreal's Irish cohort was mature and stratified to an extent that allowed for the emergence of social, benevolent and labour associations.

In Ireland itself, the principles of voluntarism were an important foundation for broader middle-class political mobilisation: the United Irishmen, the Defenders, the Orange Orders and the Militia were important institutions in the late eighteenth-century[2]. It was after the abortive Revolution, and following the Union of 1801, that the sectarian dynamic of popular politics and voluntarism became especially marked, with the growing assertion of popular Protestantism and its allied institutions on one side, from the swelling ranks of the Orange Orders to the multiplying Bible Societies and Operative

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[1]from the St Patrick's Society collection of the Archives of Saint Patrick's Basilica.
[2]Roy F. Foster, Modern Ireland, 1600-1972, (London, 1988), p 275.

Associations, and on the other side the Catholic repealers and their Liberal Clubs, which proliferated throughout the 1820s[3]. Middle class associations, especially among the growing Irish bourgeoisie--Catholic and Protestant-- had become important vehicles for political action, social cohesion, and the realisation of political realignment and a more highly accentuated sectarian consciousness. As S.J. Connolly has noted, the dynamics of Catholic-Protestant relations in the first decades of the nineteenth-century were decidedly mixed: many examples of "practical co-operation" existed alongside the sectarian animosities stoked by Presbyterian evangelicalism--which disrupted more than one pan-denominational society--,the campaign for Catholic emancipation and the growing assertiveness of theological debaters[4]. Desmond Bowen, in a hotly-contested account of Irish society in the nineteenth-century, attributes the sectarian gulf which disrupted a period of "accommodation" between the Protestant and Catholic traditions to a Protestant crusade at once "imperialist" and "evangelical" in character[5]. But, as chapter four of this study illustrates, the Catholic Church, in Rome, Ireland and elsewhere, was also developing a more politically-charged vision of religious and civil identity--one which was to be a key ingredient to the parallel evolution of the Protestant and Catholic "crusades". The Montreal Irish were capitalising on this strong indigenous associational culture as early as the 1820s, when local papers were reporting on the activities of an Irish Literary Association, a Hibernian Society and a Society of Friends of Ireland[6].

The first Irish in New France were not the mirror image of the middle-class Catholic and Protestant men who filled the ranks of the Saint Patrick's Society in the 1830s. Indeed, the early cohort in New France were a mixed lot--poor orphans,

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[3]For a cogent analysis of these and other institutions, see Foster, pp. 302-310.
[4]For an excellent account of this early period, see S.J. Connolly, "Mass Politics and Sectarian Conflict" in W.E. Vaughan (ed), A New History of Ireland V: Ireland Under the Union, I, 1801-70, (Oxford, 1989), pp. 74-107.
[5]Desmond Bowen, The Protestant Crusade in Ireland, 1800-70, (Dublin, 1978), p. xii.
[6]Robert Daley, "Edmund Barry O'Callaghan: Irish *Patriote*", (unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Concordia University, 1986), pp. 90-93.

naturalised farmers and families, and officers and Irish soldiers allied with the French[7]. The precise number of Irish in New France was a subject of long historical debate, with estimates of the number of Irish families running from as few as thirty to as many as one hundred. No serious attention has been given to this question since Thomas Guerin's 1946 The Gael in New France, although both Guerin and earlier authors agree that the Irish of New France were uniformly Catholic. A systematic enumeration of Irish colonists in New France is rendered difficult to-day by the widespread adoption of French names in the period of the *ancien régime*; it was customary in the period before the Conquest for the Irish in New France to adopt the French language as well as French names--markers of the dominant culture. If it was not a conscious decision on the part of Irish colonists to gallicise Irish names, it often was done for them by priests transcribing Irish names in parish registers (thus Timothy O'Sullivan became 'Thimoté Sylvain' and Peter Leahey, 'Pierre Lehait')[8]. In the period during and following the Conquest, however, Protestant Irish streamed into the colony. The first recorded celebration of Saint Patrick's Day was at the Quebec Garrison by Protestant officers in 1765; the garrison was also the site of the city's embryonic Masonic lodge, and over the succeeding decades the network of Masonic institutions would continue to grow.

Irish emigration to British North America in the post-Napoleonic War period was, as Houston and Smyth have noted, "not a representative cross-section of the Irish population"[9]. Generally, the emigrants were drawn from the higher social orders, especially among medium to small farmers, and the Ulster Protestants who formed a disproportionate share of the cohort were rooted in a tradition of geographical mobility.

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[7]John O'Farrell, "Irish Families in Quebec", an address given at the Annual Concert and Ball of the Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal, January 15, 1872; excerpted in Robert O'Driscoll and Lorna Reynolds, The Untold Story: The Irish in Canada, vol 1, (Toronto, 1988), pp. 281-294.
[8]Ibid.
[9]Houston and Smyth, p. 43

Moreover, the cost of passage to the colonies, which was largely unassisted, and the absence of free land grants in Upper Canada and New Brunswick by the mid-1820s, meant that most immigrants possessed the means to undertake the journey and to settle in the colonies unaided; indeed, the emigration agent for Quebec in the 1820s wrote that the Irish arriving at the port were "generally of a superior description, from the north of Ireland, from Tyrone and Fermanagh; they were men generally possessing a little property, and in anything but a distressed state"[10]. Between 1815 and 1837, over 200 000 Irish immigrants arrived at Quebec City alone, and although the large majority of them proceeded to either the United States or Upper Canada, by 1825, they represented 12 percent of Montreal's 25 000 inhabitants, and over 21 percent of Quebec's 32 000 residents[11]. In 1816, the British Passenger Acts restricted the volume of carriage on American-bound ships, doubling the cost of passage compared with the journey to British North America. Although for the next twenty years most emigrants arrived at Maritime ports, and at Quebec, where in 1822-23 alone, 8 000 Irish arrived, their stay in British North America was generally brief, and Kerby Miller estimates that over two-thirds of these arrivals headed south to America[12]. The 1844 census of Lower Canada recorded 42 000 Irish in the colony, triple the number of Scots, English and Americans, and did not include those descendants of Irish immigrants who had already been assimilated into the French-Canadian majority[13]. In Montreal alone, native-born Irish represented 18.9 percent of the population[14]. In the 1820s, the relative proportion of both labourers and Catholic immigrants increased, although the Protestants were still disproportionately represented in the cohort. The proportionate growth of Catholic immigration would accelerate

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[10]Ibid., p. 51
[11]Daley, p. 67; Houston and Smyth, p. 211
[12]Kerby Miller, Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America, (New York, 1985), p. 194.
[13]Daley, p. 67
[14]Ibid., p. 128

through the 1840s.

By the first decades of the nineteenth century there were other indications that Irish communities were well-established in Montreal and Quebec and that their leaders were taking an active part in the exercise of civil power: Dillon's Tavern was Montreal's principal inn, and in the 1829 general election, the County of Huntingdon was contested by Michael O'Sullivan, who later became Chief Justice of Lower Canada and presided at the first dinner of the Saint Patrick's Society. The character of religious institutions also reflected the Irish presence. As early as the 1760s, the Anglican Church in Montreal had expanded beyond the limited membership of the military regiments to embrace Irish and German residents[15]; its proportion of Irish adherents grew, especially after 1798, and many were also leaders in the city's early Masonic lodges[16]. The Church of England's first missionary in Quebec, James Burton, was an Irishman posted to pastoral duties first in Terrebonne, and then among his compatriots in Rawdon and the Laurentian foothills[17]. The Presbyterian denomination, to which many of the city's leading Irish belonged, had a church on St. Gabriel Street by 1792; its initial subscription list featured the leading Scottish traders of the day, a few Germans, French-Canadians and Americans, and a sizeable Irish cohort, including Sir John Johnson, Andrew Todd, Thomas Sullivan, Isaac Todd and John Neagles[18].

Irish Catholics also arrived in increasing numbers, and they organised themselves into an English-speaking confessional community. In 1792 , Father Octave Plessis, curate of Quebec, was obliged to learn English in order to minister to the Irish Catholics

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[15]John I. Cooper, The Blessed Communion: The Origins and History of the Diocese of Montreal, (Montreal, 1960), p. 4.
[16]Cooper, p. 16. Referring to the increasing Irish presence in Montreal, Cooper suggests that many comprised the "transisents": "They were usuallly Irish, many of them probably refugees from the uprising of 1798".
[17]Cooper, p. 27
[18]Robert Campbell, A History of the Scotch Presbyterian Church, Saint Gabriel Street, Montreal, (Montreal, 1887), p. 83.

in his midst, and by 1817 Montreal's English-speaking Catholics were meeting at the église Notre-Dame-de-Bonsecours for mass, under the aegis of the Sulpician Father Jackson Richard. Richard was a Virginia-born former Methodist minister who had converted to Catholicism and had become a member of the Sulpician Order in July, 1813. He remained in Montreal, ministering to the Irish, until he died of "ship-fever" in 1848 as he tended to the stricken Irish in the fever sheds at Point St-Charles[19]. In 1825, the city's Irish Catholic congregation moved to the small Recollet church on Notre-Dame Street. The church had fallen into disuse when the last Recollet priest died in 1813; its church subsequently passed from the proprietorship of the Crown to the Baron de Longeuil and then to the Sulpicians: here the Irish Catholic Congregation remained until the construction of Saint Patrick's Church some two decades later[20].

In 1825, the Bishop of Quebec, Jean-Jacques Lartigue, charged the first priest ordained under his aegis, Patrick Phelan, to the care of the Irish Congregation in Montreal. By the 1830s, that congregation had outgrown the old Recollet church, demanding in an 1833 petition to the Sulpician superior Jean-Joseph Quiblier and to Mgr. Lartigue their desire to establish a parish "in this city at their own expense, a Roman Catholic Church to be called St. Patrick's Church, and provide means for the support of a clergyman, to take charge of the congregation"[21]. In this undertaking, they were supported by the Sulpician Superior, Quiblier, a French-born priest who had arrived in Montreal in 1825, and who ascended to the episcopate in 1836, leading the Sulpicians for five years before leaving them to minister in England.

Although Montreal's Irish were well-represented among the town's middling and administrative classes by the 1820s, and were active in local churches, legislatures, and commercial concerns, they were divided along political lines which Irish national

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[19]from the Saint Patrick's Church collection of the Archives of Saint Patrick's Basilica.
[20]Ibid.
[21]Ibid.

societies would prove unable to obviate in succeeding decades. The political divisions which were to become entrenched over the course of the 1830s and '40s were well in evidence in the 1820s, when elements of the city's Irish became prominent supporters of both the *patriote* party and their opponents in the colonial government. The lives of two Irish Montrealers, Michael O'Sullivan and Edmund Barry O'Callaghan, are illustrative of wide divide in political sensibilities and civil subjectivities of the early Irish community in Montreal.

Michael O'Sullivan was the most prominent Irish Montrealer in the early years of the nineteenth century. A native of County Tipperary and a descendent of the county elite, O'Sullivan came to Montreal as an adolescent, and was educated at the Sulpician College Saint-Raphael before being commissioned as a lawyer in 1811[22]. He later became a militia officer, aide de camp to Lieutenant-Colonel Charles-Michel d'Irumbery de Salaberry, and a decorated soldier. Although early in his career he had been a close associate of leading French Canadian reformers, especially fellow advocate Denis-Benjamin Viger, by the time he was elected to the Legislative Council for Huntington County in 1814, O'Sullivan's politics were markedly conservative. His rise through the ranks of the colonial elite was rapid: by 1833, he had served as commissioner for the erection of parishes, president of the Advocate's Library and Law Institute, King's Counsel, and Justice of the Peace. In 1833, Lord Aylmer named O'Sullivan solicitor-general, citing his impressive credentials and his standing in "public estimation in this Province for probity, Professional ability and sound constitutional principles". Although Louis-Joseph Papineau had served as a witness at his marriage in 1831, from O'Sullivan's appointment as solicitor-general, their paths diverged markedly. For his loyalty during the uprisings of 1837-38, O'Sullivan was rewarded with the position of Chief -Justice of the Court of King's Bench, Montreal District. By the time of his death

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[22]Alan Dever, "Michael O'Sullivan", Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. VII, (Toronto, 1988), pp. 666-668

only a few months later, O'Sullivan had become a pillar of an emerging civil order, and had come to articulate the conservative orientation shared by many in Montreal's Irish community and embodied in the Saint Patrick's Society.

Montreal's first national societies, the Saint Patrick's, Saint Andrew's, Saint George's and German societies, which "emerged in the city under the cloak of fraternal and charitable societies" were founded by leading Constitutionalists opposed to the liberal *patriote* programme and were united, first informally and then formally in 1835, under the umbrella of the Constitutionalist Association. The Association formed the vanguard of opposition to the *patriotes*, initially on the political stage, and later, more ominously, in tacit support of quasi-military organisations such as the Doric Club[23]. Leaders of the Saint Patrick's Society, including virtually every member of its executive, swelled the ranks of the Constitutionalists in public meetings, and later led several volunteer brigades during the Rebellions. If the meetings of the individual societies inculcated a respect for structures of formal authority, organised ritual and important--although limited--degrees of openness, accountability and tolerance[24], the public meetings of the Constitutionalists became moments when a civil project united the four leading national societies, and integrated them into a much broader culture of public politics. Defence of the civil order was the unspoken mission of the Saint Patrick's Society, and the *patriote* threat provided the impetus for the mobilisation of conservative leaders in fraternal blocs. Theirs was a tradition which would endure through the nineteenth century, although it would never claim the full support of the city's Irish, many of whom lent their support to more reformist programmes championed by Daniel Tracy and Edmund Barry O'Callaghan.

In 1825, a young physician came from County Tipperary to Montreal with his

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[23]Elinor Kyte Senior, Recoats and *Patriotes*: The Rebellions in Lower Canada, (Ottawa, 1985), p. 12.

[24]R.J. Morris, Civil Society, Subscriber Democracies and the Parliamentary Government in Great Britain, working paper, (Edinburgh, 1987), p , 15.

brother and sister: Dr. Daniel Tracy arrived in a town whose population numbered some 30 000. In addition to his medical practice, Tracy took up the cause of political reform. In counterposition to the Constitutionalists, the *patriotes* established their own institutions to promote their vision of civil society: the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste was one, and it grouped together reformers from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. The Irish liberal paper was another pillar of the project. Tracy's *Vindicator*, allied closely with the reformist *La Minerve*, served as a vehicle for publicising the *patriote* programme, and in January, 1832, Tracy was imprisoned for libel by Order of the Legislative Council. Upon his release, Tracy campaigned alongside Papineau, defeating the government candidate in his constituency, Stanley Bagg, by four votes. But before he could claim his seat, Tracy died of cholera, and the editorship of the *Vindicator* fell to another prominent Irishman, the physician and legislator Edmund Barry O'Callaghan.

O'Callaghan went on to become the most strident advocate of the Ninety-Two Resolutions among the Irish of Montreal, a confidant of Papineau and an active participant in the Rebellions of 1837-38, where he faced down his fellow Irishman and co-religionist Timothy O'Sullivan. O'Callaghan also used the *Vindicator* as an organ to oppose the conservative orientation of the Saint Patrick's Society, which in 1835 was under the presidency of the Tory Councillor John Donnellan. Of the Society and its allied fraternals, O'Callaghan wrote in 1835:

> The Constitutionalists of this city carried out their 'national origin' principles, in the course of last spring, by cutting up their followers into squads, and separating them into political parties or 'societies', according to the country they, or their forefathers, came from. The Scotch Tories were parcelled out into a 'St. Andrew's Society'--the English Tories into a 'St. George's Society'; the Irish Tories into a 'St. Patrick's Society; and the German, Dutch and Flemish Tories into a 'German Society'. All this was done in order to be able, through these sub-divisions, to move the whole Tory phalanxes, with ease, whenever required [25]

[25] *The Vindicator*, October 16, 1835, in Daley, p. 181

O'Callaghan proposed instead a "Hibernian Benevolent Society"; the *Vindicator*'s sister paper, Duvernay's *La Minerve*, also joined in its condemnation of the Saint Patrick's society as an Orange organ, and urged the founding of a rival *patriote* society. Although such a society was frequently championed by the *patriotes* and their sympathisers, it was apparently never realised. Instead, following the failed uprisings of 1837-38, O'Callaghan fled the colonies to the United States in 1838, remaining in exile until his death in 1880.

The Rebellions of 1837 and 1838 not only divided Montreal's Irish bourgeoisie; they had also given life and purpose to many of the city's largest and most strident fraternals. The succeeding years would witness deepening political divisions within the Saint Patrick's Society as it groped in the absence of an imminent threat to formulate its role in an emerging social and economic system and to articulate a vision of ethnic solidarity and civil society which would resonate with the Irish middle classes and its fraternal partners. The task would not be an easy one: men such as the reformist Francis Hincks and his erstwhile opponent Dominick Daly would be heirs to a tradition of political division and mutual antagonism which had given life to two visions of civil order in the Montreal Irish community. The paradoxes of a highly integrated and internally divided community struggling to unite behind a common political project would be lived out in the short tumultuous life of the Saint Patrick's Society, and would play no small role in its ultimate reconstitution.

III: Great Possibilities: Fraternalism and the Patterns of Nineteenth-Century Civil Society

The Saint Patrick's Society of 1834 was the first of a number of national clubs established in the 1830s and '40s linked to charter immigrant communities; many of the ethnic associations were remarkably similar in constitution and composition. Within three years, the St-Jean-Baptiste, St. Andrew's, St. George's and German Societies were established to serve French-, Scottish-, and English-, and German-Canadian communities. By the mid-nineteenth century, they were to be joined by several more societies, including the Highlanders Club, the Saint David's Society (for Welsh emigrés) and the New England Society, which on March 6, 1854 declared itself open to Americans and their descendants "for the purpose of taking upon ourselves the same privileges and duties for ourselves and our countrymen that the other National Societies do"[1]. Together, these national societies represented a wide constellation of ethnicities, but a more narrow socio-economic band of the professional and merchant classes of nineteenth-century Montreal. The ethnic societies established themselves in homologous "national" units with similar structures in a short period of time, suggesting that the associations co-opted structural characteristics and allied notions of community from their counterparts. The theory of taxonomic scale posits the constitution of ethnicities within any definable space involves a complex process by which communities are conceived homologously to pre-existing units and categories. Moreover, the modest but important mutual aid provisions of the societies linked ethnic groups to a common economic interest within their individual structures, but the extensive infrastructure which supported communication and co-operation between the societies augured a broad programme premised on a wider

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[1] Constitution and By-laws of the New England Society in Montreal, Archives of the McCord Museum of Canadian History, M19260.

notion of mutual interest: an interest brought into sharp relief during the Rebellions.

The Montreal national clubs in general, and the Saint Patrick's Society in particular, were not unique in Lower Canada; in fact Marianne O'Gallagher has described, in her study of the construction of Saint Patrick's Church in Quebec, the proliferation of national associations in that city, including the emergence in the 1830s of the Irish Reformer and the Saint Patrick's Societies[2]. Robert Daley has described the Montreal Saint Patrick's Society as essentially "Tory" in character, and the high social positions enjoyed by its membership and that of its Quebec sister society betokened the low level of social distance between Catholic and Protestant Tories of the day. The Society's early members were Protestant and so-called "Anglicised" Catholic Irish: men possessing capital and property, with some educational skills, and exhibiting a high degree of integration into civil life[3]. The project of club- and society-building united these men in smaller fraternal units behind larger social and political projects, and instead of ghettoising ethnic bourgeoisies, was part of a broader associational network with strong infrastructural links, aimed at integrating, rather than fragmenting, middle-class identities and projects in the early nineteenth century. The Constitutional Association of Montreal, with its constituent national societies, provided the clearest example of this tendency, as did the preponderance of national society leaders and members in the volunteer brigades during the Rebellions: in both cases, the societies formed phalanxes in a socio-economic initiative premised on an elaborated notion of mutual interest.

Describing the proliferation of fraternal orders in nineteenth-century America, Robert Berthoff has argued that ethnic associations adopted the forms of other fraternal groups--the Masons, the Oddfellows and many others--in an atavistic effort to preserve a sense of community amid the contingency of modern life. In Berthoff's view, the

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[2]Marianne O'Gallagher, Saint Patrick's, Quebec: The Building of a Church and of a Parish, (Quebec, 1981), p. 59.
[3]Miller, p. 264

primary functions of the associations were neither political nor economic, but rather anthropological: they were instruments of primordial retreat, offering a vehicle through which traditional communal forms could be asserted--hierarchy, restricted membership, ritual--all of which had been lost amid the unpredictability and impermanence of modern life. These institutions stood, Berthoff writes, "in reaction against the social, cultural, and spiritual inadequacies of the nineteenth century"[4]. R.J. Morris has also cited the important adaptive qualities of the middle-class societies, but he sees their functional value in more specific socio-economic terms. Free from the greater exigencies of other social structures, including the family, nation and neighbourhood, and involving a far more limited commitment, the ingenuity of the fraternal order was its ability to mediate class and social divisions and create a sense of cohesion and common, if limited, purpose, building a common identity among sectors of the nascent middle classes. Morris also notes the importance of the fraternal association's ability to organise in a localised unit, while retaining links to broader movements, groups and identities[5]. The important integrative functions of the societies were facilitated by their relatively narrow objectives, and by efforts, through elaborate and fairly uniform series of rules and constitutions which expressly limited or regulated sources of conflict, to provide an arena in which potential divisions were tempered, interactions ordered, and interests channelled toward the realisation of a programme of focused social initiatives[6]. This was certainly true of the Montreal Saint Patrick's Society in its Constitutionalist phase. Later, the Society, by organising itself as a mutual aid society, proposed a new common economic interest.

The nineteenth century witnessed an explosion of interest in so-called friendly

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[4]Robert Berthoff, An Unsettled People: Social Order and Disorder in American History, (New York, 1971), p. 274.
[5]R.J. Morris. "Clubs, Societies and Associations", The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750-1950 Vol 3: Social Agencies and Institutions. (Cambridge,1990), chapter 8, p. 413.
[6]Ibid., p. 419.

and mutual societies throughout America, Britain and her colonies; they were to become fixed and important elements of the social pattern of nineteenth-century society. As early as 1801, an observer had estimated the total number of friendly societies in Britain at 7 200, comprising 648 000 individuals[7]. As with many other institutions of the period, these groups co-opted the logic of gendered segregation and were almost exclusively male: insofar as membership presaged or betokened broader public political participation, the "fraternal" character of the societies revealed at once the increasing horizons, and gendered limits, of middle class public politics. In the first two decades of the century, twenty-two counties in Britain boasted local mutual societies comprising over 5% of the county's total population: the two most prominent features of these institutions, most of which spanned a variety of occupations, were to provide sick benefits and widows' allowances.[8] The numbers and constitutions of the British societies are particularly well-documented, owing to the work of the Select Committees of Parliament which aimed to bring greater actuarial precision to the societies by the early 1820s. By mid-century and beyond, the local societies were dwarfed by larger affiliated orders, notably the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows and the Ancient Order of Foresters, which combined the mutual aid functions of the older friendly societies with more elaborate rites and rituals of belonging.

If the explosion of mutual benefit societies heralded a new middle class social pattern, it was particularly accentuated among immigrant groups in America and the British colonies: the earliest of these institutions in urban America were of a pronounced middle-class character, some expressly precluding from membership those who had been peasants in their home country[9] . By the latter part of the century, the immigrant

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[7]in P.H.J.H. Gosden, The Friendly Societies in England, 1815-1875, (Manchester, 1961), pp. 4-5

[8]Gosden, Self-Help: Voluntary Societies in the Nineteenth Century, (London, B.T. Batsford, Ltd. 1973) p. 13-15.

[9]John Bodnar, The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America,

fraternals were demonstrating two marked tendencies: one towards federation, a process in which the provincial loyalties and internal divisions of the individual societies were stabilised through affiliation with larger orders, and one of disintegration, a process in which internecine feuding, which frequently characterised the most economically- and politically- integrated cohorts, led to paralysis within their old organisations of mutual support[10], as growing numbers of middle-class men battled for a power-base to advance their status and prestige in the broader public arena. This phenomenon, whereby the fraternal became an arena for intensifying internal politics, was characteristic of Polish and Slavic societies in the latter part of the nineteenth century; factionalism augured secessionist movements within both groups. But this tradition of internecine strife had been bequeathed by the earliest societies of the century, especially those of charter groups, among which the Irish fraternals were the most varied and divided.

The manner in which Montreal's national societies, rather than fragmenting identities, provided a framework within which smaller units could be integrated into a larger social and class project was evidenced by the close connections between the Saint Patrick's Society and its sister societies. Beyond the Constitutionalist forum, devised as an organ of Tory counter-assertion, the national societies shared administrative and constitutional structures, and mingled on social occasions in the 1840s and '50s. The high degree of interaction among the societies is reflected in the minutes of the Saint Patrick's Society's Scottish counterpart, the Saint Andrew's Society.

The Saint Andrew's Society first met on the Feast of its patron, which, falling in 1834 on a Sunday, was instead held on the following Monday, December 1st at the Albion Hotel. Under the chairmanship of Adam Ferrier, the dinner was described by the Club's early historian as having "abounded in sentiments of strong national feeling"; it

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(Bloomington, 1985), p. 121.
[10]Lizbeth Cohen, Making A New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939, (Cambridge, 1990), p.68.

was decided that a more permanent association should be formed, and initial preparations began in January of the following year"[11]. The members adopted as a model the Constitution of the St. Andrew's Association of New York, and the first meetings of the Society were held under the auspices of the Honourable Peter McGill[12]. Within a short time, the Society had procured for its activities banners, flags, collars and badges, and entered into an agreement with the other Societies (The Saint Patrick, German, and Saint George Societies) to attend each other's festivals, agreeing "on the order of march, which was, that the Association whose day they were celebrating should go first, and the others in order, as their festival day came round". The Saint's Days were mandated in the societies' constitutions as days of national commemoration, and provided occasions for the societies to parade together and then join in dinner festivities: instead of serving as occasions for the manifestation of ethnic chauvinism, they provided a fulcrum for broader social interaction. In fact, at an early stage a proposal was submitted to the societies:

> that, in lieu of a procession on each festival day, which was considered as of too frequent occurrence, only one general procession should take place each year, and that it should be on the birthday of the sovereign. Committees were appointed on the part of all the Societies to take the subject into consideration, but they decided against any change; at this time, proposals were also made to build a Union Club-house under the auspices of the National Associations, and sub-committees were appointed to consider the propriety of doing so--these Committees went so far as to have plans and estimates drawn out, but it was finally decided to be inexpedient to attempt such an enterprise at the time...[13]

The Feast Day parade was a potent symbol of political participation and "belonging": the 1830s were a period of reformist foment, and both sides of the political divide used pageantry and parades as a form of political spectacle: ceremonies of

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[11]Sir Hugh Allan, "Saint Andrew's Society of Montreal", (Montreal, 1844), p. 9.
[12]Ibid.
[13]Ibid.

commemoration skilfully and colourfully combined martial and carnival ethos with displays of ethnic and civic fidelity[14]. The parades also provided instruments by which the middle-class participants, by spilling out into the public squares and streets, asserted their place in the public sphere. The warm relations between the national societies were evidenced at the Saint Patrick's parades--an 1836 report shows that the German, Saint George and Saint Andrew's Societies formally joined in the March 17th procession--and at the annual dinners, at which the so-called "sister societies" were customarily represented. At the first formal dinner under the aegis of the Society in 1835, toasts were offered up to the Saint George's Society, whereupon "Britons, Strike Home" was sung, followed by the Saint Andrew's Society (to the tune of "Auld Lang Syne" and "Here's a Health, Bonnie Scotland")[15].

When Peter McGill was invited to make remarks, he entreated "without, I trust, trespassing too largely upon your attention, that the Saint Patrick, Saint George and Saint Andrew Societies have originated from motives the most praiseworthy, in times most trying for friends the most holy and patriotic". He enumerated their shared goals, including, most crucially, "the preservation of social and political interests, the conservation unimpaired of our happy form of government, the maintenance of that connection between the Colony and the Empire, and, last, but not least, the enjoyment of innocent festivity and social intercourse in celebrating the anniversaries of our respective Patron Saints". McGill enjoined upon his hosts that "when the gales blow contrary, and the tide sets strongly against us, let us pull together, and we cannot fail to bend to windward"; the Saint Andrew's Society would prove its tough Tory mettle in the Rebellion Losses debate of 1849, when the Society expelled the Scottish Governor Lord Elgin for deigning to countenance legislation injurious to "the victorious defenders of the

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[14]see Michael E. McGerr, The Decline of Popular Politics: the American North, 1865-1928, (Oxford, 1986), pp 23-33.

[15]John Loye, "Saint Patrick's Day in Montreal One Hundred Years Ago", *The Gazette*, March 16, 1935.

Throne"[16]. This conservative sense of civic solidarity bespoke the social ranks from which the national societies drew, and defined their project in the 1830s.

As with its Montreal counterpart, the membership list of the early Quebec Saint Patrick's Society confirmed it as a Tory institution; members included the Provincial Secretary, Dominick Daly, the Receiver-General Henry John Caldwell, and Judge Edward Bowen[17]. Marianne O' Gallagher has also noted a marked correspondence between the Society's membership rolls and the rolls of the Loyal Volunteer and Queen's Volunteer militias. There was also a striking military character to the Montreal Saint Patrick's Society, and the extent to which the martial ethos of the Society was imbued by a visible reverence of crown and class offers evidence of the intertwining of an ethnic subjectivity and conservative political disposition. The Feast of Saint Patrick had first been celebrated by garrison officers, and the affair's military trappings had not vanished: at the first Society dinner in 1835, the President, Michael O'Sullivan, noted that he was surrounded by a large number of men clad in the uniforms of the 18th Royal Irish Regiment. An account of the 1836 processions described the Standard of Ireland being carried by Thomas McGrath, flanked by supporters "with battle-axe", and followed by Irish pipers and the band of the 32nd regiment; as at the previous year's meeting, toasts were offered to the king, the Navy and Army, and also to "Our Countryman, the Governor-in-Chief", "Sir John Colborne and the Garrison of Montreal"[18]. The city's chapter of the Highland Society of Canada, established in 1843, held as its first imperative "preserving the martial spirit, language, dress, music and antiquities of the ancient Caledonians"; its precedents--the Saint George's, Saint Andrew's, Saint Patrick's and German Societies, had served as training grounds for the officers in the volunteer militias, and had championed martial discipline in their public displays.

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[16]Edward Andrew Collard. "The Traditions of the St. Andrew's Society", reprinted from Montreal Yesteryear's, (Montreal, 1962) in The Saint Andrew's Society handbook.
[17]O'Gallagher, p. 59.
[18]John Loye, "Saint Patrick's Day One Century Ago", *The Gazette*, March 14, 1936.

The Saint Patrick Society's endorsement of hierarchical systems of authority was also reflected in the composition of the Society itself. Although its members were drawn more broadly from the higher middling ranks of society, its president throughout the 1830s and '40s was invariably drawn from the highest orders of its membership: indeed, the first heads of three of Montreal's four national societies were Tory Councillors. As R.J. Morris has written in his study of English fraternals, this hierarchical structure was another manner in which the national society served to mediate the aspirations of the middling orders and the reality of social inequality within a narrow section of Montreal society[19].

Newspapers of the day also revealed Saint Patrick's Societies in Sherbrooke, Kingston, and several other colonial cities by the middle of the century, alongside the national clubs of the Germans, Scots, and New Englanders. The Saint Patrick's Society of Toronto, a contemporary of both the Quebec and Montreal societies, shared the characteristics of the Montreal association: although predominantly Protestant--its chaplains were both Anglicans in the 1850s--the Society drew from high social ranks, and its presidents were leaders of civic importance[20].

Like all the male fraternal orders and associations of the day, from fire companies to insurance companies to building societies, the Saint Patrick's Society was governed by elaborate constitutions which detailed the minutiae of the annual meeting, committees, membership requirements, the election of officers and honorary members, parades and orders of precedence. Although most were governed by the principal of majority votes by paid-up members, the setting of meeting agendas was generally left to a committee of management, and a higher threshold was set for admission to the societies. By organising themselves in a formal manner, the societies were at once institutionalising

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[19]Morris, "Clubs, Societies and Associations", p. 413.
[20]Daniel C. Lyne, "The Irish in the Province of Quebec in the Decade Leading to Confederation", (unpublished M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1960), p. 126.

forms of subscriber democracy and finding formal processes which would help mitigate against internal division and regulate interaction within their ranks. In 1834, the Montreal Saint Patrick's Society adopted provisional Rules and Regulations for the Government of the Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal. The mission of the Society, according to the Rules, was to "advance the cause and welfare of Irishmen....to afford advice, information, and assistance to fellow Countrymen immigrating hither, and to promote their settlement in this Province wherever they can be encouraged to it by the view of advantageous prospects..."[21]

In this respect, the Society's aims differed little from its sister societies in Montreal. Membership in the Society was afforded to "Irishmen and descendants of Irishmen only", ostensibly "of all classes, and of all creeds[22]". In its early years, the non-sectarian character of the Society seems to have been borne out by the composition of its executive: the first chaplain of the Society was Father Patrick Phelan, the ranking Irish Catholic curate, but it counted on its committees such prominent Protestant names as Workman and McCord.

In 1836 the Society drafted, adopted and printed a formal Constitution entrenching the membership criteria set out in the Rules, spelling out the process for electing officers, providing for the annual Saint Patrick's dinner, and also including a limited mutual aid provision:

> Ordinary members, in case of sickness, provided such may not have been brought on by intemperance or bad conduct, shall be entitled to an allowance from the funds of the Society, not exceeding $12 per month, application for which must be made to the Charitable Committee, at one of its meetings, accompanied by a certificate from one of the Physicians of the Society.[23]

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[21]Rules and Regulations for the Government of the Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal, (Montreal, 1834), in the collection of the McCord Museum of Canadian History M13876.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Constitution of the Saint Patrick's Society, (Montreal, 1836), in the collection of the

Although the ethnie was a common foundation for the establishment of limited mutual aid organs throughout the nineteenth century, and the Saint Patrick's Society and its sister societies always named "Society physicians" responsible for the care of club members, it is highly unlikely that any of the Saint Patrick's Society's early members would have taken up the provision: in spite of the Society declaring itself open to those of "any class", its members included Benjamin Holmes, manager of the Bank of Montreal, William Workman, president of two banks, partner in a hardware concern, and mayor of Montreal, and Francis Hincks, later prime minister, and then governor of Barbados and the Windward Islands and of British Guinea[24]. The Society did appeal to "men of all creeds", and it found instruments to mediate religious division within its ranks and thereby reduce the potential for contentious debate. While the Quebec Saint Patrick's Society went so far as to prescribe religious discussions in its constitutions, in the aim of "promoting union among all classes of Irishmen, and those of Irish origin in Canada", the Montreal Society relied on more informal instruments for ensuring internal peace. In recognition of its mixed Catholic and Protestant membership, it became the Society's custom on the Feast of Saint Patrick to alternate services between the Anglican Christ Church and the small Recollet Catholic Church, both on Notre-Dame Street[25]. The club's calendar year began on March 17th--Saint Patrick's Day, and it was the marking of Saint Patrick's Day which was one the Society's stated purposes: the holiday was only later to develop more explicitly religious overtones.

Although the Saint Patrick's Society sought to limit sources of friction amongst its members, it was less than successful in the post-Rebellion period in creating the sense of cohesive interest which could serve as a basis for decisive social action. An

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McCord Museum of Canadian History M13876.

[24]Collard, The Irish Way, p 9.

[25]from the Montreal Gazette, "Old and New", June 15, 1901. The letter was directed to the "Old and New" columnist, and was signed by "An Irish Canadian".

examination of the highly-charged debate over the formal constitution of a benevolent fund at the Society in 1847 demonstrates the extent to which the association's success in promoting focused common objectives was undermined by political factionalism. In the absence of a threat to civil order--the very thing which had given life and purpose to the Society and which had united it through the 1830s with its sister societies--the Saint Patrick's Society yielded to internal conflict. Political realignment in the post-Rebellion period changed the character of the Society's membership: those who professed loyalty to the civil order were no longer unwilling to contemplate its reform. Divisions emerged between those who proposed to refashion the civil order--the Reformers--and Tories who entertained few visions of liberalism. The battle over the Society's constitutions, which pitted supporters and opponents of Francis Hincks' presidency against one another in a very public manner, placed the instrumental weakness of the Society in clear relief. The Irish community's high level of integration into civil structures also meant that debates played out within the society reflected broader political ambitions. Indeed, it was because the Irish were so prominent in wider arenas that control of the society was seen as a springboard for public politics. With ambitions not confined to the internal hierarchy of the Society itself, Irish community leaders undermined the authority and autonomy of their national society. Their conflicts bespoke the new political alignments in colonial society, centred on deeply entrenched divisions between Francis Hincks and Dominick Daly.

Dominick Daly was born in County Galway and had come to Lower Canada as the private secretary of the lieutenant governor, Sir Francis Nathaniel Burton[26]. In 1827, Daly was named provincial secretary, and from then through the Rebellions, the Durham Report and Union, he deftly survived political and administrative tumult, seeking election at the behest of Lord Sydenham, and then surviving, in turn, the Baldwin-Lafontaine,

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[26]Elizabeth Gibbs, "Sir Dominick Daly", Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol IX, (Toronto, 1979), pp. 189-193.

Bagot and Metcalfe ministries as provincial secretary and member of the Executive Council. It was only with the ministerial crisis of 1843 that Daly earned the enmity of the Reformers. On November 27th of that year, in a protracted quarrel with Governor Metcalfe, Robert Baldwin and Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine led their colleagues out of the ministry. Daly alone remained on the government benches. The ire of the Reformers centred on the provincial secretary, and although he survived an attempt at impeachment and a duel, he was forced to resign when the Reformers returned to office in 1848.

Throughout the upheaval, Daly had endured the wrath of the Reformers, and none was more vociferous in his condemnation of Daly than Francis Hincks. Born in Cork to a Presbyterian minister and his wife, Hincks came to York in 1832 as a businessman, and was soon caught up in the Reform politics of the period. With the failure of the Rebellions, which he himself had opposed, Hincks established the *Examiner* as an organ of the moderate Reformers, and won election for Oxford County following the union of the Canadas in 1841. Hincks' relationship with his fellow Reformers was frequently uneasy, but he proved his mettle in the crisis of 1843 by steadfastly supporting the position of Baldwin and Lafontaine against Dominick Daly, and later, in 1844, by moving to Montreal to take up the editorship of a leading Reform paper before establishing his own journal, *The Pilot*[27]. By 1848, Hincks was once again active in politics as inspector general in the Baldwin-Lafontaine ministry. Although he was no longer proprietor of *The Pilot*, the Montreal paper remained unabashedly pro-Reform, and seldom missed an opportunity to excoriate Dominick Daly. In a March 12, 1847 editorial reporting on rumours that Daly would be named head of the Lower Canada Post Office, *The Pilot* described Daly as "notoriously incompetent", and recommended that the Ministry pension him off rather than appoint him to a government position "merely that he might be provided for". The sharply worded editorial coincided with a series of

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[27]William G. Ormsby, "Francis Hincks", Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol XI, (Toronto, 1982), pp. 406-416.

conflicts within the Saint Patrick's Society early in 1847 which had spilled over to the pages of two of Montreal's warring broadsheets: Hinck's *Pilot*, sworn to the defence of "Liberal and Constitutional Principals"[28] and the Tory *Montreal Transcript* of John Lovell[29]. The debates which so divided the society in this period reflected its efforts to reinvent a sense of mutual interest to replace the conservative Constitutionalism of the Rebellions period. No longer faced with an imminent threat against which a collective interest could be defined in defence of "civil society", and divided by men whose political life and ambitions extended outside fraternal politics and the offices of their societies, Hincks championed mutual benefit as an instrument of renewing solidarity within the Saint Patrick's Society.

In the raucous annual proceedings of the Saint Patrick's Society, in February, 1847, Francis Hincks was nominated to the presidency by members of the Society who then encouraged fellow members to endorse Hincks by acclamation. Over the apparent objections of the Society actuary, a hand vote was held, confirming Hincks's election, as well as the elections of Benjamin Workman and John Tully as vice-presidents of the Society. Underlying the debate over Hincks' election was controversy over the amendments to the constitutions of the Society which he advocated, creating a more elaborate benefit society for its members, and thereby giving the President and officers of the Society, in the words of one supporter, "more to do than merely march in processions once a year, or to take the chair at a dinner"[30] . In a letter to the editor of the Montreal *Transcript*, an anonymous "old member of the Saint Patrick's Society" lamented that the Society had done little in the area of philanthropy--this having been left to a variety of other organisations, including the United Irish and Scotch Relief Fund and the Montreal

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[28]in Jean Hamelin and André Beaulieu. La Presse Québécoise dès origines à nos jours, vol 1. (Montréal, 1975), p. 136

[29]Ibid., p. 91

[30]*Transcript*, March 6, 1847

Hibernian Benevolent Society for Irish and Highlanders[31]--and under Hincks's tutelage had evolved into little more than a "man-stalking money agent", under the influence of "heartless avarice". Short of cancelling its annual dinner in acknowledgement of the "distressed state of our fellow countrymen" following a "course of action ...generally adopted in the United States and United Kingdom"[32], the evidence suggests that the Society's leadership saw the consolidation of a benefit society as a more advantageous prospect than philanthropy. In his letter to the editor of the *Transcript* dated February 25, the anonymous "Old Member" of the Society declared:

> The Saint Patrick's Society was once a charitable one--an index, or rather a specimen, of national benevolence--it is now the reverse. It was wont to hold out the hand of relief to distressed claimants without pay--it (now) relieves none but those who pays for relief; then, it was a society of benevolent gratuity--now, a society of taxable benefits...the Saint Patrick's Society, as now constituted, is a mere burlesque on that nation which it purports to represent.

To complicate matters, the city's ranking Irish already had a financial institution largely under their purview. At the City and District Savings Bank, wealthy and prominent Irish Montrealers had managed to find a refuge from internecine quarrels: in 1848, the Irish Protestant William Workman was president of the Bank, long-time Society Vice-president John Collins was its actuary, Francis Hincks and Bartholomew O'Brien served on its board and the Roman Catholic Bishop of Montreal served as patron. Because of the Bank's prominence, many critics of Hincks' scheme suspected that any benefit to be derived from the establishment of a competing institution, rather than "mutual" would be credit to Hincks. To this charge that the Society was deviating from its original mission, a Hincks supporter replied:

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[31] *Transcript*, March 2, 1847
[32] *Transcript*, March 9, 1847

> It would occupy too much of your valuable space, Mr. Editor, were I to take the authorities to prove the great advantages to the public of the "Benefit Society", which are held by some to be superior to Savings Banks. But I may ask this "Old Member" whether he looks at the various societies of Oddfellows, Rechstaites, or the Hibernian Benevolent Society as 'mere man-stalking money agents' and their members acting under the influence of 'heartless avarice' because they desire to lay by a portion of their earnings for their support in sickness and old age, or for the benefit of their families in death. Shame! I say on their slanders. The Irish citizens of Montreal have sufficient opportunities of giving whatever they are able to bestow in charity. Experience has proved that an Irish National Society is a very expensive and unsatisfactory medium for distributing alms, and that it has failed to obtain the support of the great masses of industrious classes...[33]

To answer these claims, another writer, identified only as "W.H.C." fired a salvo from the *Transcript*, accusing Hincks and his supporters of "appropriating the banners, regalia, and other property to a purpose totally different from that intended by a majority of the members, and I think that those persons have just as much right changing it into the 'Saint Patrick's Lodge of Odd Fellows' as they had of changing it to the 'Saint Patrick's Benefit Society'". Noting that the Montreal Irish already had a Hibernian Society established as a mutual benefit organ, the author alleged that in opposing Dominick Daly's candidacy, Hincks and his supporters were intent on making the Society "a political faction"[34]:

> And they still have the impudence--nay, it should be attributed more to their ignorance--to call themselves a National Society? Pshaw! It is now quite obvious to every person from the disgraceful proceedings that took place at the last annual meeting, that the so-called Society consists of no more than twelve or fifteen individuals who are determined, as it appears, to carry everything that their leaders propose, by "the boot-heel acclamation"; and it would not astonish me in the least should there happen to be a scarcity of shoe leather among the members at the next annual meeting, to hear of the introduction of the cudgel or the brick-bat...

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[33] *Transcript*, March 6, 1847.
[34] *Transcript*, March 11, 1847.

With that, the writer proposed that a new national society be constituted, comprising those "respectable and conscientious individuals who still adhere to the last shattered fragment of that once-respectable body, with a devotion and sincerity worthy of the 'patriots of old' in the hopes of being able to redeem that institution and of seeing it once more placed in that respectable position which it once held among the National Societies of this city".

The debate over the role of the Saint Patrick's Society as an institution of the "industrious classes" reflected the society's inability to adapt to the political realignments which had emerged in the post-Rebellion period and to transcend internal division and serve as a vehicle for community cohesiveness and class action. The conflict over mutual benefit was grafted onto long-simmering political divisions within the Irish leadership which by March, 1847, had reached so fevered a pitch that it appeared that a new society might be formed. "Certain Irishmen", *The Pilot* intoned, "principally Orangemen and a few Catholics who have either deserted their party within the last year or two or who have always acted with the Tories, have determined to establish a new National Society...So long as their party had the ascendancy, all was right, but, like genuine Tories, they would not allow their opponents the slightest influence"[35]. A new association was not established to rival the Saint Patrick's Society, and indeed, five years later, its presidency was to fall to one of the most prominent dissenters of 1847, Thomas Ryan. But this incident suggested that the Society was rife with factional discord. If, as R.J. Morris has suggested, one of the principal foundations of the clubs and associations of the nineteenth century was to acculturate a general practice in subscriber democracy[36], the open votes and alleged heavy-handed electioneering of the Society's members made even such purportedly constitutionally-governed processes sources of bitter contention.

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[35]*The Pilot*, March 12, 1847

[36]R.J. Morris, Class, Sect and Party: The Making of the British Middle Class, 1820-1850, (Manchester, 1990), p. 184.

The Society was becoming a casualty of the Irish cohort's successful integration into the culture and practices of public politics: to those whose horizons extended beyond the Society's offices, it became merely a tool for political advancement. Failure to transcend internal division on the mutual aid question, or to even develop voting practices and constitutional processes to regulate conflict, were symptoms that, after only a decade, and in spite of efforts to recast itself as an organ advancing mutual interest, the Society was yielding to internecine strife. The "Old Member" of the Society who had written to the *Times* lamenting the Society's limited philanthropic activity, and the member who had responded to his charge, had both acknowledged that the Saint Patrick's Society was not a forum in which the crisis of the Irish Famine had been addressed. Indeed, papers from the period suggest the activities of several other *ad hoc* groups, especially the United Irish and Scotch Relief Fund, eclipsed the Saint Patrick's Society in the philanthropic arena. The famous Famine migrations had swelled the ranks of the city's Irish population, straining its modest social service infrastructure and altering the demographic and social profile of the Irish community; although the Famine migrants are now seen as a relatively modest number in the narrative of Irish migration, the arrival of over 70 000 men, women and children in Quebec city ports alone had a profound impact in 1847[37]. But while the parties who so crippled the Saint Patrick's Society came together in other venues, in apparent harmony, with the aim of providing relief for the Famine poor, the good-will was generally short-lived. The *Montreal Herald* reported on February 12, 1847 that a general meeting of Irish citizens had been convened to discuss the provision of relief. Among those who attended were the Tories Dominick Daly and Thomas Ryan, Reformers Francis Hincks and Theodore Hart and hundreds of other leading Montrealers: the papers reported near-unanimous endorsement of the evening's speakers, who included both Hincks and Daly, and wide support for their efforts at

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[37]MacKay, p. 190.

establishing a United Irish and Scotch Relief fund. Within a month, however, the Hibernian Benevolent Society appeared on the pages of the city papers comprising members who had seceded from the United Society. In a published message in the *Transcript* on March 9th, the Hibernians declared:

> The slanderers of Irishmen in this country are numerous and vindictive--ready to seize upon the slightest incident that would afford food for their malignity; yet, knowing this here we have Irishmen giving them an opportunity to exhibit the venom of their bigotry...We are not disposed to bend to Eastern policy and brook the nod of absolutism..no, sir, we will not suffer an unwarrantable assumption of superiority on the part of these McGill Street gentlemen...

Evidently, the Saint Patrick's Society was not the only Irish organisation caught in the undertow of political factionalism: the Irish "national community" seemed to be far too broad a church for its various warring constituents to interact harmoniously, yet alone generate precepts of "mutual interest".

The Saint Patrick's Society was an arena in which an ethnic equilibrium was negotiated, the category of Irish ethnicity was constituted and filled, and in which ties were created to integrate the ethnic and institutional units into a broader patchwork of public participatory space. In the absence of the *patrtiote* threat and the Constitutionalist programme, the Saint Patrick's Society was falling apart.

Whether or not the nineteenth-century club served as a vehicle through which men adapted themselves to radically different social and economic contexts by devising instruments and objects of communal action, or by merely harkening back to more atavistic tribalism, the Saint Patrick's Society seemed by mid-century to have failed on both counts. By 1847, it was being undermined by political realignment, and was challenged on several fronts: by the manifest failure of the Society to generate principles of mutual interest and communal assertion, by the successful acculturation of Irish

community members and leaders into the broader spectrum of public politics and culture, and by emerging cultural forces: a new demographic cohort, a triumphalist Roman Catholic Church, and the broader cultural influence of anti-Popery and the Protestant Ascendancy. These were the features of the taxonomic space within which the Irish ethnic category was soon to be reconstituted and the ethno-religious character and civic disposition of the Saint Patrick's Society reshaped.

IV: A Church Triumphant and Divided: The Dynamics of Ultramontane Catholicism and Ethno-religious Identity

The Saint Patrick's Society was born in a period pre-dating the Rebellions of 1837-38, at a time when the Roman Catholic Church's ultramontane consolidation was in its infancy. The church's power developed in the 1840s, and the changing demographic character of Irish Montreal had a profound impact on the functions and character of the Society. When Timothy Smith, in an influential study of religion and immigration, began to probe the links between ethnic and religious identity[1], his work came under heavy criticism for its failure to problematise the one-to-one correspondence between 'national identity' and the 'national religion', and for failing to engage the intricate rivalries and factionalism between groups within a confessional community. Both the French and Irish churches in Montreal serve as examples for both the strengths and weaknesses of Smith's claims: among French Canadians, the Church, with the allegiance of well over 90 percent of the French Canadian community, could claim to articulate the soul of the nation, while among the Irish, many of whom were Protestant, confessional triumphalism fragmented existing ethnic and national identities.

Montreal ultramontanism--in both its French and Irish incarnations--was at once a product of local exigency and circumstance and part of a broader re-thinking of the Church' s place in civil society provoked by events and personalities thousands of miles across the Atlantic. Eighteen-forty-eight was a year of revolution throughout Europe--and it was to have enormous consequences for the dogma and leadership of the Church of Rome. That year, in the face of revolutionary upheaval, the Pope was compelled to flee Rome, and in the ensuing months, Guiseppe Mazzini became Triumvir of the Roman Republic. Turning his back on liberalism and convinced that there could be no

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[1]Timothy Smith, "Religion and Ethnicity in America", American Historical Review, no. 83, (1978), pp. 1157-1185.

compromise with the nationalist movements sweeping Europe, Pius IX asserted his political primacy and temporal power in his famous allocution *Quibus quntisque* in April, 1849: a strongly-worded condemnation of those who would abrogate the temporal powers of the Papacy, and the pre-cursor of Proposition 76 of the 1864 *Syllabus of Errors*[2]. The Pope's efforts at blending the crown and mitre, in part a reaction to local circumstance, but also part of a more universally combative approach toward liberalism, resounded around the world, providing fodder for anti-Catholic press and pamphleteers, and papal approbation for the elaboration of more ambitious and totalising Catholic social patterns, from continental counter-revolutionary movements to ultramontane Ireland, England and Lower Canada. The ultramontanism of the Roman Catholic Church in Lower Canada, and in particular the ethno-religious nationalism of its French and Irish components, would send the Saint Patrick's Society further into the orbit of the Roman Catholic church.

The devotional revolution taking place in Ireland, famously described by Emmett Larkin, was to be advanced-- to a certain extent and under different conditions--by the diaspora in the colonies, and as the sectarian divide within the Irish community became increasingly pronounced, so too did the ethnic divide within the Lower Canadian religious polity[3]. Larkin, the pre-eminent historian of the nineteenth-century Irish Roman Catholic church, has argued persuasively that the so-called devotional programme of the ultramontane church represented a dramatically amplified ecclesiastical social presence among a people who, in the years prior to the Famine period, and until the decisive internal reform proposed by the 1850 Synod of Thurles, were largely outside the orbit of both church and sacrament. In a rejoinder to Larkin's studies, which have tended to focus on the high politics of the Church and the personality of the mercurial Archbishop

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[2]E.E.Y. Hayes, Pio Nono: A Study in European Politics and Religion in the Nineteenth Century, (London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1954), p. 105.
[3]Emmet Larkin, "The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-75", American Historical Review, no. 77 (1972), pp. 625-52.

of Armagh, Paul Cullen, David W. Miller has proposed to study of the resonance of ultramontanism amongst the Irish in functional terms: namely, what kinds of social behaviours did the doctrines of ultramontane Catholicism propose, and what, specifically, did they replace?[4] Both of these approaches are crucial to our understanding of the confessionalisation of the Saint Patrick's Society, and, more broadly, of the ethno-religious matrix which developed inside the Irish Church of the diaspora. Certainly ultramontanism was the intellectual backbone of the Church in Lower Canada, under the vigorous sponsorship of Bishop Ignace Bourget.

Bourget ascended to the episcopate upon the death of Monsignor Jean-Jacques Lartigue in April, 1840, and set about expanding and amplifying Lartigue's conservative doctrinal programme. By the 1840s, the Church in Quebec was reawakening, spurred on by the evangelising impulse of the roving French missionary Monsignor Charles de Forbin-Janson, by Bourget's own concerted efforts to expand the presence of French religious congregations in Lower Canada, and by an energetic campaign of Catholic devotional and administrative reform, which expanded the church's presence in the colony and extended its influence to a wide array of social and cultural endeavours, from parish libraries to philanthropic confraternities, Catholic broadsheets, savings banks, hospital and schools[5]. The irony of the ultramontane revival of the nineteenth century--a development crucial to understanding the ethno-religious character of associational life--was that although ultramontanism staked out ground as a vehicle of Roman Catholic universalism, its emphasis on institutional privatism made it instead a vessel of ethno-religious particularism. Among the French Canadians, the religious polity provided an anchor to which institutional networks, communal identities and virtual civic fidelity

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[4] David W. Miller, "Irish Catholicism and the Great Famine", Journal of Social History, no. 9 (1975), pp. 80-98.

[5]for a comprehensive discussion of ultramontanism, see Philippe Sylvain and Nive Voisine, Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois, Les XVIIIe et XIXe siècles, Tome 2: Réveil et Consolidation (1840-1898), (Montréal, 1991)

could be attached; it also became the principal generator of ethnic symbols. A parallel process was taking place in the Irish Catholic churches of London, Philadelphia and other major urban centres of nineteenth-century migration[6]. Mission-preaching, church construction and the expansion of lay associations--coupled with processes aimed at administrative centralisation--stabilised the authority of the church and the social patterns which had developed around it.

As Bourget consolidated the Lower Canadian Church, the Irish Catholic Church in both Montreal and Toronto was revived--institutionally and ideologically-- by a heavy infusion of Roman ultramontanism. As in the case of French Canada, the broad institutional consolidation essential to the ultramontane programme provided both a concrete associational and institutional framework--as well as a coherent ideological foundation--for the immigrant church to serve as a vessel of ethno-religious identity. As French Canada was forging a distinctly clerical nationalism, so the elements of the Irish diaspora were developing an "Irish Catholic culture". Although broadly similar in character, the Catholic ethnic revivals had markedly different locuses both in the Montreal church and in the community imagination: late in the century, conflict over Bishop Bourget's efforts to tug the Irish "national" parish within his ecclesiastical orbit would underscore how separate Montreal's Irish and French Catholic churches had become, and in how variegated and disconnected a manner their ultramontane revivals had developed. Indeed, the Irish and French Catholic congregations and their communal identities by mid-century gave some credence to Gramsci's later observation that "Every religion, even Catholicism (indeed Catholicism more than any precisely because of its efforts to retain a 'surface' unity and avoid splintering into national churches and social stratifications), is in reality a multiplicity of distinct and often contradictory religions"[7].

Ethnicity remains one of the most canalising elements in social life: as Frederik

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[6]Bodnar, p. 151.

[7]Roger O'Toole, Sociological Studies in Roman Catholicism, (Lewiston, 1990), p. xv.

Barth noted in 1969, ethnicity assumes a series of constraints and expectations which transcend specific situational contexts and, in the "constellation of statuses or social personalities" is, alongside sex, one of the most durable. Its component social conventions "are made further resistant to change by being joined in stereotype clusters as characteristics of one single identity"[8]. Because of its almost unparalleled ability to canalise social life, the grafting of other social personalities and identities onto the ethnic matrix, creating, for example, an ethno-religious category, can give a stability and force to social personalities by capitalising on the extensive institutional network of the religious polity. The ultramontane church in nineteenth-century Montreal is a case in point, and the civic identity which it proposed represented an alternative to other identities and sources of authority.

The institutional elaboration of the Montreal Irish church rested on two pre-conditions which invariably bound the Irish bourgeoisie to the fate and future of the Irish Catholic community: the establishment of a parish and church as the physical nexus of the community, and the acquisition of funds for its ancillary organisations and activities. In his important study of the Immigrant Church, Jay Dolan notes that while the Irish Catholic churches of New York drew from across the occupational and class divide, many immigrants there, as elsewhere, were only nominally adherent, and the members of the middling and merchant ranks--well-represented in the Saint Patrick's Society--provided crucial administrative and financial direction in the churches[9]. The Irish Catholic diaspora had benefited from the munificence of several leading Irish families in Montreal and by the diaspora community's established presence in the city: by 1843, the church's subscribers had raised an impressive $12 000--enough money to purchase the old estate of the late fur baron Pierre Rastel de Rocheblave, and begin construction of an

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[8]Barth, p. 17

[9]Jay Dolan, The Immigrant Church: New York's Irish and German Catholics, 1815-1865, (Baltimore. 1975), p. 53

Irish Catholic parish church, with a capacity of 2 500. On St. Patrick's Day, 1847, Saint Patrick's Church was opened: it was to provide the nexus for the elaboration of Irish Catholic community in subsequent decades.

The erection of the Irish parish was the first part of a growing network of Irish Catholic institutions developed under the patronage of the Irish Sulpician clergy, many of whom had cemented their moral influence through the difficult period of Famine migration: five of the Irish priests of Montreal had succumbed during the typhus epidemic. The priests of Saint Patrick's Church were without exception native Irishmen, and their most prominent member, Father Patrick Dowd, had served at Armagh, and then Drogheda from 1840-'47, when the Irish church was beginning the process of institutional consolidation and positioning itself as a key articulator of the soul of an "Irish Catholic" national constituency[10]. The Church also won the patronage of prominent Irish benefactors: there is no more striking illustration of the growing matrix of Irish Catholic associational life and the increasing depth of elite bourgeois and clerical ties than the records of Bartholomew O' Brien, a shipping magnate whose will survives as a testament to the increasing institutional co-operation of the Montreal Roman Catholic church and Irish community leaders[11].

O'Brien's will represents to posterity the ambitions of Irish Catholic institution-building in the 1840s, and amplifies themes of ethno-religious community and the growing power of the church's claim to a form of civic fidelity. As he lay in St-Joseph's ward of the Hôtel-Dieu in 1847, "sick and weak in body", O'Brien, a central figure in the City and District Savings Bank, dictated to notaries the disbursement of a considerable fortune upon his death. First, Father Dowd, "almoner of the Irish population of Montreal", was named trustee of a fifty-pound yearly allowance to be distributed

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[10]Harel, p. 267

[11]O'Brien's papers are at the Archives of the McCord Museum of Canadian History, currently uncatalogued.

amongst the Irish Roman Catholic poor of the City. Father Felix Martin, superior of the Jesuit Order, was bequeathed a twenty-five pound annuity for the poor to be dispensed by members of the order travelling in Canada for the Propagation of the Faith. The rest of the will continued in this vein: a twenty-five pound annuity to be paid towards the erection of churches "amongst the Irish Roman Catholic population of Canada"; a twenty pound annuity for the education of a "young female desirous of entering religion", and an equal amount annually for the education of a young man "desirous of entering the ecclesiastical estate"; one thousand pounds for the construction of an Asylum for the Irish Roman Catholic Orphan Children, with a condition that the building be "adjoining Saint Patrick's Church of this city", and which would also provide "accommodation for Irish female servants out of place"; a twenty-pound annuity for three hundred masses for the repose of his and his parents souls". After provisions of annuities to his brothers, their children and his former housemaid, O'Brien mandated that a one hundred pound annuity be provided to a parish priest in County Tipperary, to be distributed "equally and annually amongst the Roman Catholic Poor of the different parishes of the said town of Clonmell".

O'Brien's munificence, and the energy of the Irish Catholic congregations, provided the financial patronage for the infrastructural elaboration of Irish Catholic life, but the most zealous efforts of the Irish clergy were directed at the lower orders of society, who were brought into the Church by a variety of confraternities, processions and rituals which sought to draw the church into the rhythm of adherents' daily lives. The late 1840s were a time of especially heavy Irish migration to the cities of Britain and North America, and tens of thousands of Catholics were added to the charge of the parish priests. As Lynn Hollen Lees has noted in a study of the London Irish, the Church also "consciously used Irish symbols to draw migrants into church activities": the Montreal Irish church invoked the patron Saint Patrick with considerable success, naming many of

its confraternities and the "national" church after him and marking his Feast on the seventeenth of March with the greatest solemnity[12]--that he came to be almost a wholly appropriated symbol of Irish Catholicism, rather than of a non-denominational category of Irish ethnicity. This development was to have important consequences for the non-confessional society which bore his name[13].

Another Montreal institution, "l'hospice Saint-Patrice" was formally brought under clerical control in February, 1852, with the Irish parish priests serving as the "Comité Gerante". The elaboration of Irish Catholic community had success in bringing together a broad range of Montreal's Irish--from the members of the Saint Patrick's Society to recent Famine migrants--transcending a wide variety of class, county and Gaelic cultural loyalties to provide important social cohesions through the celebration of Irish culture in the English idiom, and the transcendence of "national claims over local ones"[14]; the adoption and elaboration of ethnic symbolic markers provided a vehicle through which familiar Irish forms could be related to the urban milieu. If the Saint Patrick's Society had failed to find the right instruments for the effective assertion of communal non-confessional Irish identity and mutual interest following the abortive Rebellions, the precepts and claims of ultramontanism provided Catholics in the Society with a new, stabilising authority and identity upon which they could premise their claims to the public sphere. Constitutionalism and the exigencies of defending a conservative vision of society had lent vitality to the Society in the 1830s and had lain at the heart of the Society's vision of mutual interest. Ultramontanism was also infused with conservative impulses, and offered a vision of civil society, mutuality and community in which the Catholic bourgeoisie would play a central role. Also, ultramontane

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[12]Saint Patrick's Church was officially consecrated on Saint Patrick's Day, March 17, 1847.

[13]Lynn Hollen Lees, Exiles of Erin: Irish Migrants in Victorian England, (Ithaca, 1979), p. 195

[14]Lees, p 196.

authoritarianism and the active intervention of the parish priests could prove to be effective instruments to check internecine strife and provide discipline, order and direction to the Society's proceedings. In order to take up the call of the ultramontane programme, however, the Society would have to cast away structures and constitutions which by mid-century stoked conflict and paralysis.

V: Hardening Boundaries: The Sectarian Press and Ethno-religious Conflict in Mid-Nineteenth Century Montreal

Reflecting on the events of the 1850s, Sir Francis Hincks remarked that "cordial co-operation between Roman Catholics and Evangelical Protestants can scarcely be expected when questions are at issue involving scruples of conscience on the part of either", and he in fact marvelled that the 1840s had been a period of such limited sectarian tension[1]. The Saint Patrick's Society--of which Hincks was a member--did not have to make a long march from political obscurity and irrelevance: it had, at its inception, incarnated the conservative disposition of bourgeois Montreal and was a powerful interest in Montreal's political and professional classes. The high profile of its leadership in the broader community gave the Saint Patrick's Society a symbolic importance which belied its relatively weak position as an instrument of communal action. The Society was an arena sensitive to shifts in the broader cultural climate, sensibilities and subjectivities. Its ultimate dissolution and reconstitution represented the institutional consolidation of a reconstituted ethnic category in a complex taxonomic space.

The 1856 partition of the Society into new Catholic and Protestant organisations was the result of a process of confessionalisation that became increasingly acute in the 1850s: the extraordinary demographic changes brought about by the absorption of the Famine immigrants had widened the Society's constituency. At the same time as Montreal imported people, it imported a broad range of rhetoric and ideas, from Irish ultramontane Catholicism to British anti-Popery. Most importantly for the Society, the language of Irish ultramontanism emphasised the mistrust of Protestant institutions and suspicion of "Protestant Ascendancy". Counter-poised against it and the "Papal

[1]Sir Francis Hincks, A Political History of Canada Bewteen 1840 and 1855, (Montreal, 1877), p. 46

Aggression", the two ethno-religious categories and cosmologies of Catholicism and Protestantism evolved, each claiming vulnerability and victimisation. If the swelling ranks of the Catholic societies, the Orange Order and Masonic lodges were one indication of political realignment, the press was a second crucial arena for mobilisation.

The invective of the Montreal sectarian press and pamphleteers had roots which stretched across the Atlantic. In 1823, the *Dublin Evening Mail* sounded the clarion call for popular Protestantism in its campaign against Catholic Emancipation[2]; it, in return, faced a host of largely Catholic newspapers championing Repeal. As in England, the Irish sectarian presses and pamphleteers were becoming increasingly vocal by mid-century. In the late 1830s and '40s Rev. R.J. McGhee and Rev. Mortimer O'Sullivan became to popular Protestantism what Father Tom Maguire had been to the Catholics in the 1820s: ardent proponents of confessionalism who, through publications and the press, marshalled theology to cement the logic of sectarian divides.

In the Montreal papers of the period, the division between Catholic and Protestant camps seemed increasingly acute: the two most vocal press organs were the Protestant *Witness*, established by the fervent convert to evangelical Protestantism, John Dougall[3], and its Catholic rival, the *True Witness*, founded by a Scottish Catholic convert and devoted ultramontane Orestes A. Brownson[4]; these two journals were both the fulminators and faithful documenters of the increasing sectarian tensions of mid-nineteenth-century Montreal, and they devoted the largest part of their reporting to events transpiring in Europe and America. These papers linked English Papal Aggression, the Maynooth College grant debates, and other contentious issues on the other side of the Atlantic to the specifics of the colonial context, and assimilated them into a broader cultural interpretation of religious menace. The "Papal Aggression" and the "Protestant

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[2]S.J. Connolly, "Mass Politics and Sectarian Conflict, 1823-30", Vaughn, p. 7783
[3]Hamelin, pp, 147-149.
[4]see Sylvain and Voisine, pp. 77-81

Ascendancy" were imported rhetorical strawmen--symbols which provided a resonant framework for interpreting new social and political developments within an old world lens, and tools used to construct cosmologies around which new categories of community would coalesce.

The 1840s and '50s were decades of religious discord and increasing sectarian division. Although the language of Catholic triumphalism and Protestant evangelicalism was widely shared across Britain, her colonies, and America, the Canadas experienced a specific set of conflicts centred around education and proselytism. Protestant propagandists appealed to popular prejudices with lascivious narratives such as *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*; the former Italian priest Alessandro Gavazzi provoked riots in his 1853 tour denouncing the Church of Rome[5]. Although on the surface reform of the education system and disestablishment of the Church of England seemed to represent the triumph of secularist ideals, it was in fact an endorsement of Protestant voluntarism, and did little to diminish Catholic-Protestant division, and conflict over the establishment of separate schools in the united Province of Canada pitted increasingly confident Protestant evangelicals against militant ultramontanes. In this charged atmosphere, the murder of a young Irish convert to Protestantism in St-Sylvestre, and the subsequent acquittal of his assailants by a Catholic judge and jury, was fodder for the Protestant press. It is not surprising that the particular set of circumstances, combined with imported cultural predispositions from Europe and America, bred mistrust and mutual antagonism and created an atmosphere in which calls for institutional privatism resonated.

The *True Witness* in 1854 called upon Catholic Irishmen to withhold contributions to a newly-established "Patriotic Fund", until a "Committee approved of by the Church" could be appointed to take charge of subscriptions. The Fund could become,

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[5]for an excellent discussion of Protestant-Catholic conflict see Terrence Murphy (ed.),A Concise History of Christianity in Canada, (Toronto, 1996), p. 178 and pp. 296-300.

the paper warned, an instrument of Protestant conversion, and it pointed to what it characterised as "unfairness to Catholics" in the distribution of the fund proceeds[6]. On July 21st, referring to the Orange parades in Toronto, the paper fulminated against the apostasy of the Orangemen's "idolatry" of King William[7]. The *True Witness* was the clarion of Irish Catholic institution-building, and articulated an ethno-religious Irish nationalism which characterised the increasing sectarian identity of the diaspora community. While announcing that it would abstain from "purely political" debates, the paper nonetheless defended its positions on politico-religious issues[8], including the Clergy Reserves and School Question. Furthermore, referring to the ever-widening divide between Irish Catholic and Protestant cosmologies, it set its sights on many non-sectarian institutions. The paper said of its rival, the nominally secular *Freeman*, "if Irish Protestants or Orangemen choose to support it as an avowed opponent of the True Witness--our only tried and trusted organ--we are quite willing, that it should grow and flourish on such sap[9]". The Protestant *Witness* responded in kind. "Who Are Our Enemies?" the *Witness* asked on February 13, 1856; in a rambling diatribe aimed squarely at the "Papal Aggression" it intoned:

> There can be no doubt that the Jesuits are the very soul of the administration of Romanism...The Pope is once more asserted to be the Prince of the Kings of the earth; the doctrine is openly put forth that the Church ought to rule in the State, and for this purpose, control the education of the youth, watch the proceedings of Parliament, direct the conscience of the supreme magistrate, and have the entire superintendent of the Press...With the assertion of these doctrines, there is introduced that energetic style of administration proper to a state of war...
> such is that attitude and such the policy of the Church and Court of Rome when the counsel of the Jesuits prevail, and who that knows Canada will deny that such is her attitude at this day. And in fact we do wrong to expect it to be otherwise. The Jesuits are what they are, only because they

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[6]*True Witness*, December 8, 1854.
[7]*True Witness*, July 21, 1854.
[8]*True Witness*, June 16, 1854.
[9]*True Witness*, August 18, 1854.

> more thoroughly carry out the principles of the Church. The Ultramontane is the only true Catholic. Gallican liberties, or liberties of any sort, are an absurdity and an inconsistency in her dominions; an absurdity she may be forced to endure for a time, but which she is bound to get rid of as soon as possible.
> In war nothing can be more dangerous than ignorance of the resources of the enemy; and the general who neglects to inform himself therefore deserves to be surrounded and cut off. To misconception on this point, the Allies owe many of their disasters before Sebastopol; and the Protestants of Canada are in danger of defeat from their ever-watchful foe for the same reason. We cannot know too much of our enemy, and the proverb tells us the connection between the fore-warned and the fore-armed...
> Our enemy is the Church and Court of Rome--we name both these to indicate that it is with a power that combines the elements of politics and religion we have to contend. It is not only Popery in the abstract, but Popery as administered by living men, we have to fight...[10]

The sectarian invective was part of a broader narrative of Catholic triumphalism and Protestant evangelicalism in which strains of the Old and New Worlds intermingled. The process of objective and subjective categorisation does not, as Marcus Banks notes, take place in a vacuum, nor is the process an autonomous one: classifications beget classifications, and categories are both generated and ascribed in relation--and in antithesis--to each other. The "taxonomic space" within which the confessional Irish identity was developed approximated in some important ways that of mid-nineteenth-century England, where the Restoration of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in 1850, the vigorous ultramontanism of both Rome and Cardinal Wiseman, and the activities of the Tractarians, set ablaze flames of "anti-Popery". These issues and events were watched closely by the press and pamphleteers in British North America, and they were faithfully documented and widely commented upon. Cardinal Wiseman had stoked evangelical hostility in 1850, with the publication of his pastoral *Out of the Faminiam Gate*, which was judged inflammatory and denounced by much of the British Press and the Anglican establishment as a symptom of Papal Aggression. Whether or not the ensuing aggressive

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[10] *Witness*, February 18, 1856.

public rhetoric of anti-Popery was due to Wiseman's own impolitic comments or was a symptom of Protestantism in crisis, as Robert Klaus has suggested, the consequences for England's Old Catholics were the same: whereas they had previously monopolised the expression of Catholicism in the country, and had done so with marked discretion and compromise with civil authorities, they now found themselves caught between an increasingly vocal hierarchy and an aggressive public[11]. The 1850s also witnessed a marked increase in sectarian tensions in British cities with Irish populations comparable to Montreal: in Liverpool, Glasgow and Dundee, the Irish represented around one-fifth of the population, and these cities were notable centres of conflict in which "Protestantism" was invoked as a vehicle for a wider patriotic appeal for which many of the cities' Irish were vocal supporters[12].

Another development was Wiseman's--and later Manning's--emphasis on institutional privatism--a pattern which was also evident in Britain's North American colonies. Certainly by mid-century the rhetoric of sectarianism in the Montreal press had reached a fevered pitch, with each side staking out a position of institutional privatism. The *Witness* pledged in 1855 to "devote our columns to conflict with Infidelity, Popery, Intemperance, Sabbath Desecration, Oppression, and other...errors, vices and crimes"[13].

By the middle of the 1850s, many of Montreal's Irish Catholics were realising a communal realignment within new social institutions under clerical patronage: they had their own parish, and with it, a locus for communal activities, their own meeting hall and annual bazaar, their own army regiments and fire companies, even their own banks. Where the Saint Patrick's Society, as a non-denominational organ, had seemingly failed to institutionalise a sense of ethnic identity strong enough for communal assertion, the "Irish Catholic" label appealed to a large and energetic constituency, a strong institutional

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[11]Klaus, p. 100.
[12]Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer, Uniting the Kingdom: The Making of British History, (London, 1995), pp. 237, 239.
[13]*Witness*, January 9, 1856

basis, uncompromising articulators and a conducive cultural climate. Some of the new ethno-religious institutions were directly linked to the Church: others, such as the proposed Catholic Fire Company, represented community responses to the fears of Protestant Ascendancy--which, whether real or rhetorical, nonetheless animated communal loyalties. The proposal for a fire company had arisen from apparent fears that the local Fire Companies were affiliated with the American anti-Catholic Know-Nothing movement. The charge had resulted from a fire at the Notre-Dame street convent, to which the *True Witness* had alleged that fire companies had responded inadequately. Describing this trend toward the establishment of confessionally-based institutions, the *True Witness* opined that the Roman Catholic Irish of the city

> are surrounded by organisations of every kind, while they themselves have none and yet they have property and homes to protect as well as others. Recent events have shown them that they must do something so as to remain no longer at the mercy of those who have the most. In forming Irish Military Companies, or Irish Fire Companies--if the latter should come to pass--the Irish of Montreal do but claim a right accorded to all others...They have been too long under the hoof of a Protestant Ascendancy in their own land and have suffered too severely from its merciless opposition to tolerate it here, where they are on equal footing...[14]

The ultramontane Catholic press made good use of the "Irish Catholic" consciousness to underscore the parallels between Ireland and the British colonies, and by raising the charge of Protestant Ascendancy, raised the ire even of the more moderate *Gazette*. The Montreal *Gazette* retorted, in a column reprinted in the Montreal *Witness*, that "We have heard lately from several quarries of attempts made to get up distinctive Irish Catholic Fire Companies and Irish Catholic militia Corps, at the same time that a Convention is being held at Buffalo to pour in a large body of Irish Catholic immigration into the Ottawa country...". The paper duly noted that a difference of language might

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[14]*True Witness*, February 15, 1856

necessitate the establishment of French- and English-Canadian militia corps, but intoned:

> why a distinction between the different English speaking races--nay, that a distinction between men of different religions, though of the same origins should be got up, pass our comprehension. We can imagine much evil it may do; the unpleasant sort of strife it may breed, and for that reason we trust any such movement will not persist in, or it be, that the authorities having the direction of the militia will not recognise such distinctions.[15]

The *Gazette* proceeded to argue that "it is as much to be desired here as in the United States, that in so far as possible, all races should become blended and fused so as to form one people--that we should all remember we are Canadians alike, and not set up our distinctive national origins as reasons for keeping us apart. Especially is the contrary spirit to be deprecated in our militia, fire department, and other similar organisations..."[16] But it was exactly because such institutions--as the bulwark of civil order--were brought into the embrace of the Church that the institutional strength and rationale of Catholic privatism was so powerful and persistent, and that it could be properly claimed that Catholics were in the process of developing a parallel civil system. Indeed, they even proposed their own emigration programme at the Buffalo Convention, called by D'Arcy McGee to unite Irish Catholics from across North America for a common project of settlement assistance. In an article published on March 5, 1856, the Montreal *Witness* opined:

> It seems strange that the Convention did not inquire why the social condition of the Roman Catholic Irish was below other countries....for want of education and the Bible.
> The Convention is mistaken about prejudice existing against the Roman Catholic Irish. Their acts of violence and lawlessness, their opposition to the institutions and governments of the countries in which they live; and their disregard of truth and justice, both as witnesses and judgement, has brought upon them the dislike of their Protestant neighbours. There is no

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[15]from the *Gazette*, reprinted in the *Witness*, February 20, 1856.
[16]Ibid.

> prejudice in the matter. Let Irish Catholics be sober peaceful, honest, truthful and industrious, and they will be as much respected by Protestants as any other people. They are not disliked because they are Roman Catholic--if that were the reason the French Canadians would be disliked. Any ill feeling towards the Irish Romanists...is invoked by themselves[17]

Just as leading Irish Catholics had directed considerable resources to the establishment of St. Patrick's Church, many bourgeois Montrealers also weighed in with vocal support for Catholic institutional privatism. Abandoning civil tradition, they saw ethno-religious privatism as a vehicle for stabilising middle-class identities and projects, and Catholic institutions as forums for engendering status and power. Bernard Devlin, the Irish-born lawyer and future President of the Saint Patrick's Society, delivered an address to the Young Men's Saint Patrick's Association in 1854 in which he argued that "Irishmen are, even in this free country, systematically disregarded, and ...an Irish Catholic with, of course, an occasional exception, is always the last man thought of, when honours are to be conferred". Devlin called for a congress of Saint Patrick's Societies from across the colonies, arguing that Irish Catholic had become the victims of governmental neglect, and often of outright hostility:

> On every side we see ourselves surrounded by secret organisations, which, it is evident, are not intended to promote our welfare; and hence it cannot be a matter of surprise that we should ascertain our own strength, and avoid detracting from its efficacy, either by internal dissension or unfriendly estrangement. I do not, however, pretend that we should imitate the example of the "Orange" or "Know-Nothing" conspiracies, that we should be governed, as they are, by mysterious signs, or guarantee our fidelity of their observation by the obligation of oath...[18]

Devlin repeated his calls for a network of Catholic societies throughout British

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[17] *Witness*, March 5, 1856.

[18] Bernard Devlin, Address of the Young Men's St. Patrick's Association of Montreal, (Montreal, 1854).

North America in a letter to the Bishop of Montreal, in which he urged that the Bishop support the Association in its efforts to conduct "themselves in accordance with the spirit of Catholic teaching". This call, from the outgoing President of the Saint Patrick's Society's youth auxiliary, represented an endorsement of privatism by a leading member of the Irish community, and support for placing the Saint Patrick's Society within the growing constellation of Irish Catholic institutions.

The growing sectarian divide also influenced the councils of Montreal fraternalism and had far-reaching implications for the once-close relationship between the Saint Patrick's Society and its sister national societies, tearing asunder the broad class-based unity which had prevailed at their foundings. The close co-operation between two national societies which had collaborated on a civil project of "maintaining the social order" had not always run smoothly: on one occasion, five Anglican clergymen had denounced the societies' co-operative plans to mark Saint Patrick's Day[19]. But little criticism had emanated from within the societies themselves. By the 1850s, things had changed. In 1853, Mr. Edmonstone of the Saint Andrew's Society was reported to have:

> brought before the Society the embarrassed position in which the office-bearers of the St. Andrew Society were placed at the dinner given by the St. Patrick's Society, in drinking the health of the Pope, and thought some action should be taken by the Society in the matter--which led to some considerable discussion. The President explained that the health of the Pope was proposed after "the Queen"--and, that it was some young men of some other society on St. Patrick's Day who drank to the health of the Pope before that of the Queen--not the St. Patrick's Society, and as a Catholic Society they drank the health of the Pope in a similar manner to when the St. Andrew's Society drank to that of the 'Kirk of Scotland'[20]

The messy question was resolved by leaving the matter "in the hands of the future

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[19]Daley, p. 200.

[20]"Saint Andrew's Society of Montreal: A Summary of the First Fifty Years' Transactions", 1886) CHI 13112, p. 31.

office-bearers" with the prevailing opinion being that "if the President should hear before that the health of the Pope was to be proposed before "the Queen", it would be his duty to refuse to be present, or retire if so proposed in his presence", but it was a remarkable introduction of sectarian tension in a Society which had in February , 1839, seen fit to name the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Kingston an honorary member[21]. Here, the civic loyalty of the Society members was seen to be at risk in according the Pope precedence in the order of the toast, and it was an indication of the extent to which the symbols of Catholicism were seen to be contrary to Protestant civic identity.

This one item in the minutes of the Saint Andrew's Society symbolised a much broader realignment of ethnic subjectivities: privatism was becoming a source of tension as the "Catholic" Irish boundary become unhinged from a more broadly-shared social and cultural subjectivity and project. Debate within the Saint Patrick's Society would now no longer turn on its constitutions and practical functions as an instrument of the "industrious classes", but rather more explicitly on the constitution of the "Irish nation" itself.

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[21] Ibid., p. 20.

VI: The End of Equilibrium: The Dissolution and Reconstitution of the Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal

On January 15th, 1856, at the Annual Soirée of the Young Men's Saint Patrick's Association, an auxiliary of the larger Society, at the City Concert Hall, an affair replete with brass and quadrille bands and with the mayor of Montreal in attendance, Charles Sharpley, newly-elected President of the Association, rose to address the assembled dignitaries. He told them that the Association was in debt, and as an officer of the Association, his task would be a daunting one, especially given that "there is a report in circulation that an attempt will be made to dissolve the body"[1]. Within one month this rumour would be realised: both the Young Men's and the Saint Patrick's Society would be dissolved and reconstituted in one Catholic Irish society. Although the dissolution of the Society has never been looked at in detail, most passing references to the event have described it as an innocuous parting of ways, urged upon the Irish Catholics by the ranking cleric of the day, Patrick Dowd. Dowd was instrumental in bringing about an institutionalised expression of a new ethno-religious category, but it was not a category which he himself had single-handily conceived or elaborated--the "new" Saint Patrick's Society of 1856 gave concrete representation to the currents which had for some time been tugging the boundaries of the Irish community in new directions.

The proliferation of Irish Catholic institutions gained pace in the 1850s. It is perhaps no surprise to note that at this time the clerical leaders of the community were cementing their influence and authority: with the construction of Saint Patrick's Church, built for the Irish Catholic community, and opened in 1847, the community now had a physical centre from which the long tentacles of Irish clericalism could extend. And extend they did, under the particularly determined aegis of one man: Father Patrick

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[1] *Transcript*, January 17, 1856.

Dowd. Father Dowd oversaw Saint Patrick's Church and its ancillary organisations for over thirty years, becoming one of the most famous Canadian clergymen of the century, and the man who one Irish society described as "our spiritual father"[2]. Dowd was a native Irishman, born in County Louth, Ireland, in 1813; at the age of nineteen he went to Paris to study theology at the Irish College, and was ordained by the Archbishop of Paris in 1837[3]. He returned to Ireland for a period of ten years, spending six at the Archdiocese in Armagh. After resolving to become a Sulpician, Dowd journeyed to Paris for a one-year noviciate. By 1847, the Irish congregation in Montreal was struggling with a typhus plague which had left the Irish Catholics bereft of curates. Dowd's own cousin, Father Morgan, was among those who had succumbed to the disease on July 8th of that year[4]. In an effort to restore his depleted Irish contingent, the Sulpician Superior, Quiblier, went to Ireland, and there recruited three men to the service of the Montreal congregations: Fathers O'Brien, McCullough, and Dowd. Dowd set sail for Montreal in June, 1848, to become curate at Saint Patrick's Church: twelve years later, he became the church's pastor. Dowd had been in Ireland while the devotional revolution was still in its infancy, but he been exposed to, among others, the strains of Irish-Catholic institution-building in the projects of men such as Father Mathews, the Temperance crusader who had established the Catholic Temperance Society in Cork in 1838[5]. Dowd was an active promoter of Irish Catholic institutions, and many associations which sprang up during his tenure at Saint Patrick's bore his mark: the Saint Patrick's Temperance Society, established in 1850, the Saint Patrick's Orphan Asylum, opened in November, 1851, the Saint Bridget's Home for the old and infirm, in 1865[6]. In establishing these institutions,

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[2]Minutebook of the Saint Patrick's Total Abstinence Society deposited at the Archives of Concordia University, Irish collection.
[3]Bruno Harel, "Patrick Dowd", Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. XII , (Toronto, 1990), pp. 266-267.
[4]Ibid.
[5]Ibid.
[6]Ibid.

Dowd insisted upon their independence not only from the framework of Protestant associational networks, but also from the French-Catholic matrix--thereby underscoring the extent to which his Catholic ultramontanism was a vehicle for the expression of the Irish ethnic community. Dowd organised an array of activities, from the annual excursions of the Saint Patrick's Societies to a pilgrimage to Rome in 1879[7]. He was also the chaplain of the Saint Patrick's Society for thirty years, and in that capacity took an active role in shaping its direction alongside the other ancillary associations of the church, "institutions of charity and education", as he would later describe them, "...that prosper under the blessing of God and are doing good work in the cause of the poor and of religion". But among these institutions, Dowd judged the Saint Patrick's Society to be "first amongst our societies; its duty imposes the necessity of giving good example when the interests of Saint Patrick's are in question" [8]. When he died in January, 1892, Dowd would be eulogised by the Sulpicians in Paris as someone whose goal was "maintenir en eux (ses pariossiens) l'ésprit d'unité par la religion". He would be praised for his opposition to Fenianism, his battles with Orangemen, his condemnation of mixed marriages, and his support of temperance. There would even be a lament penned by a member of the Congregation:

> For over half a century
> He laboured for his flock
> And fought the battles of the Church
> that Stands on Peter's Rock.
> Today, in heaven's chancels,
> with harps resounding loud,
> The angel choirs make welcome
> For dear, good, Father Dowd[9].

As the speech of Charles Sharpley at the annual soirée suggested, rumour had

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[7]From the files of Patrick Dowd deposited at the Archives of Saint Patrick's Basilica.
[8]Ibid.
[9]Ibid.

gripped the Irish community for some time that "dear, good Father Dowd" and the clergy of Saint Patrick's Church were unhappy with the constitutions of the Saint Patrick's Society and were desirous of its dissolution. The Society had clearly been unable to transcend internal divisions to realise communal objectives: its inability to create cohesive support for a benefits society had demonstrated its weakness as an agent of class action. At the same time, it continued to be riven by internal conflict, much of which pitted not Protestant factions against Catholics, but Catholics against each other. The Saint Patrick's Society was, in its final days, to demonstrate its weakness as both an organ of focused middle-class social action and as an arena for so-called subscriber-democracy, as two incidents called into question not only the Society's tenuous foundations of support among an ethnic "national community" more divided amongst and against itself than ever, but also the electoral rules by which it was governed.

The immediate impetus for the dissolution of the two societies had been the instructions of Father Dowd, who, had "on Sunday last publicly expressed a desire that both the Irish Societies should be immediately dissolved, in order that the strength of the two should be concentrated in one body; and which body would be considerably fortified by the augmentation of several members of the congregation who hitherto had been unwilling to identify themselves with either of the Societies"[10]. The division later evidenced at the dissolution of the Young Men's Saint Patrick's Association was also evident in the Society in the weeks preceding Father Dowd's directives. As the Society prepared for the Buffalo Convention, it resolved to nominate delegates. The meeting went far from smoothly. A petition was presented soon after to Father Dowd, and signed by several leading members of the Society, including its secretary, Charles Sharpley. In it, the forty signatories described the meeting. According to them, the congregation had been invited to attend the meeting by Father O'Brien. When they arrived, James Sadlier

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[10]*Transcript*, February 16, 1856.

and Dr. Howard nominated Bernard Devlin and George Clerk as the Society's representatives. "This motion was about being carried", the petition read, when Mr. M.P. Ryan, City Counsellor, seconded Mr. Isidore Mallen, proposed that a third delegate be nominated"[11], arguing that Montreal, with a population of close to 50 000, was entitled to the same representation as smaller cities, who were accorded two. To that end, Ryan and Mallen nominated W.P. Bartley. "The resolution being put, there was a good deal of ill feeling manifest", during which the signatories contended that "disgraceful" debate ensued. Ryan, Mallen and "several who felt that their proposition was a reasonable one" withdrew from the proceedings, accusing Howard and Sadlier of undertaking "without consulting any of the undersigned not only to propose one but to dictate to the Congregation two delegates" left the room. Their primary complaint, in which the echoes of the 1847 brouhaha were more than faintly audible, was that the "reasonable" proposal to consider a third delegate was to be put to a show of hands. "No report of the proceedings can appear which will not bear out the facts therein stated", the petition continued, urging Dowd to intervene and resolve a dispute for the sake of "the unity of sentiment" which should prevail among Catholics". On January 15th, a notice appeared in the *Transcript* announcing that a meeting of the "Dissentionists from the proceedings held Sunday last" would take place that evening at O'Meara's restaurant. There, the counsel of Father Dowd was invited, and his response to the crisis in the Society's ranks came swiftly.

At an extraordinary meeting of the Society called on Tuesday, February 12th, and held at a room adjoining the old Recollet church which had once served as the nexus of the Montreal Irish Catholic congregation, the dissolution of the Society was proposed and unanimously carried. The Resolution of the meeting began by noting that the Society had "heard the wish of the Catholic Clergy clearly expressed, for good purposes--that it

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[11]the original petition, undated and uncatalogued, is deposited in the Saint Patrick's Society collection at the Archives of Saint Patrick's Basilica.

should be dissolved in order that another Society should be formed which would embrace elements now divided in which jealous feelings would be extinguished"[12]. The minutes then noted that "there are conflicting opinions opposing parties amongst the Irish inhabitants of this city....(and) therefore the Society approves of the decided part taken by the Clergy, who have no personal object to serve" and no interest but "the welfare, respectability and happiness of their countrymen". The Society resolved to act on the advice of the clergy "and propose that immediate action should be taken in accordance with advice rendered them by guides by whom they as their forefathers were never forsaken". Immediately, a resolution dissolving the Society was passed, followed by a vote to place the property of the Society in the trust of the "Clergy of Saint Patrick's Church".

Four days later, the Young Men's Saint Patrick's Association held a Special General Meeting at its rooms on St. Helen Street--the meeting was described in the *Transcript* as having been "numerously attended"; its purpose was to disband the Society in compliance "with the Reverend Clergy of St. Patrick's congregation". There was considerable debate over whether or not the terms of the Association's Constitution permitted its dissolution, but a motion passed that the article in question "was never contemplated as a barrier against the interference of our clergy to dissolve the same--they having recommended and earnestly requested a dissolution of this Association"[13]. One group of members argued for an adjournment--that resolution passed with "only nineteen members" in favour. Further debate erupted, at which time several supporters of the adjournment withdrew, in protest of the vote as unconstitutional, and the resolution dissolving the Society was put to a vote, passing 36-21. But the debate did not end there: nineteen members of the Association proceeded to submit to the Secretary, Charles Sharpley, a protest, which he judged "illegal"."Resolved", one of the meeting's official

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[12]Ibid.
[13]*Transcript*, February 16, 1856.

declarations read, belying the heated conflict which had transpired:

> That we, the members of this Association, cannot now separate without calling to mind the many happy hours and the social intercourse we have enjoyed together since the formation of this body; and the Irish sentiment and brotherly love which have characterised us during that time, will ever animate us throughout our lives[14].

Although the dissolution of the Association had been effected, it had occasioned considerable opposition. The *Witness* enjoyed the spectacle, editorialising from the sidelines that the French Canadian members of the Institut canadien had shown more resolve in the face of clerical pressure than their young Irish co-religionists:

> When the young French Canadians forming the Institut canadien manifested a disposition to think and act for themselves the priests, as a matter of course, tried in every way to smother them under a majority of patrons (sic) of the Church; but, failing in this, they established a rival Institut, called the National...and the Institut national, instead of breaking it down, has itself expired. But Irish young men of this city appear to have less love of liberty or less resolution than the French, if we may judge from circumstances which have recently transpired...the priests required the Saint Patrick's Society and Young Men's St. Patrick's Society of this city to dissolve their respective organisations and form themselves into one National Society--in some way that will be more satisfactory to their spiritual guides. What has been the trouble we are not informed; but there are some indications that the young men were beginning to think for themselves, and, therefore, must be swamped by the "beloved laity", who are older and better drilled....But the Junior St. Patrick's had rather a stormy debate upon the matter, and at first, according to the *Herald*, declined to submit to clerical dictation. At a subsequent meeting, however--doubtless after the influence of the Church had been brought to bear in various ways in private--the young men gracefully laid their necks under the feet of the priests, in a series of not very comprehensible resolutions. What the priests are going to make of the Great United Society, unless it be to have them drilled together in the Bonsecours Market, we do not know; but we have no doubt that they have their plans, and that those plans have references to the aggrandisement of the Church

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[14]*Transcript*, February 23, 1856.

of Rome[15].

On the dissolution of the Society, Father Dowd dispatched a letter, dated February 18, 1856, to Mr. Barclay, "President of the Late Saint Patrick's Society", expressing his "unqualified admiration", along with that of "my confreres, the priests", for the Society's actions. "The sacrifice was made and made by all as if it cost nothing", he wrote, "not for a moment was the path of duty obscured by those passions too often attached to societies as well as to individuals --you lost sight of self and every selfish interest and notion in elevating your view to the great public good"[16]. "It may no longer be questioned", Dowd continued, "that you existed as a Society only with a view to supply a public want and to advance the public good". The Society's decision, Dowd wrote, would ensure them the "warm and lasting gratitude of their pastors, and it is regarded by them not only as an example worthy of imitation by every Catholic Society" and as a guarantor of peace and unanimity in "a great society" comprising men willing to "labour together hand and soul for the good of religion and the honour of our dear old Erin". Writing to the Chairman of the Preparatory Meeting of the new Saint Patrick's Society on February 21, Dowd entreated that the he "have the goodness to read the following suggestions to the Meeting entering on the important business for which it was convened. We request that favour for two reasons: first to contribute all in our power towards the happy issue of its deliberations; and second, to show in the only way open to us the deep and heart-felt interest we take in the vital object to promote, which all are at this moment so happily invited"[17]. In his letter, Dowd recommended that the Committee charged with drafting the constitution of the new national society be numerous, and represent "the collective experience and judgement" of many members; Dowd also recommended that

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[15] *Witness*, February 27, 1856.
[16] from a letter of February 18, 1856 in the collection of Patrick Dowd deposited at the Archives of Saint Patrick's Basilica.
[17] from a letter of February 21, 1856 in the collection of Patrick Dowd deposited at the Archives of Saint Patrick's Basilica.

each of the two late Societies--the Saint Patrick's and Young Mens' Saint Patrick's Association--contribute four members to the Committee, each of whom was well-versed in the rules and regulations of the dissolved organisations--as well as five representatives "from the Congregation at large". Dowd then recommended in detail the process by which a new Society Constitution would be drafted, underscoring that the resulting document would be presented "to the priests of Saint Patrick's Church for their examination and approbation", and thereby be, from its formation, under Irish clerical patronage. "Should the Clergy think any changes necessary", Dowd wrote, "they will give their opinion in writing, and send the point in question back to be considered by the Committee". After having received the approbation of the clergy of the church, Dowd recommended that the draft proceed to the Co-adjutor of Montreal "for his lordship's sanction". Dowd closed by insisting on a civil tone of negotiation, and by reminding the committee that "the interests of religion and the honour of our old Ireland are in your hands...we leave them there satisfied that both are in good keeping." On March 1st, in a letter to the Montreal *Transcript*, a Society member, identified only as "S. Mad" sounded a chord of optimism: "now that both parties have honourably bowed to the will of their pastor", he wrote, "may it be essentially hoped that unanimity of feeling and brotherly love will characterise their proceedings at the approaching contest for honours".

It did not take long for two new Societies to be constituted, and for the rhetorical justifications for the division of the Society along religious lines to take shape. The *True Witness* reported on March 28, 1856 that a new Saint Patrick's Society had been established, encompassing both the old Society and the Young Men's Saint Patrick's Association with Dr. Howard at its helm[18]. Its first meeting was at the Saint Patrick's Hall, where a Committee was struck comprising several leading members of the Irish Catholic community--among them Bernard Devlin, Edward Murphy, J. Sadlier and Dr.

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[18]*Transcript*, March 28, 1856.

Howard--and charged with drafting a new Constitution. In announcing the new Society's creation, the *True Witness* argued for the confessional identity with vigour, dismissing the protests of the Society's Protestant former members, who had aired their grievances in the *Colonial Advertiser*[19] :

> While to all true Irish Catholics, these appointments have given general satisfaction, it is not strange and indeed hardly to be regretted, that they have offended some two or three disappointed Orangemen, or bad Catholics, who are so close akin to Orangemen, that it is not easy to distinguish the difference...

The *True Witness* proceeded to castigate those former members of the Society--described as Protestant "gentry"--claiming that "the burden of their song is, faithful to its principles, it (the Society) is essentially and wholly a Catholic Society, and that it will admit neither Protestants nor Freemasons into its ranks. This is a compliment of which the Saint Patrick's Society may well be proud". The vein of the argument contained strains of both ultramontane sectarianism and anti-Ascendancy political rhetoric. In a half satirical tone, and using the language of anti-Catholicism which it imputed to the Protestant cohort, the paper continued its invective by appropriating exclusively to Catholicism that most venerated symbol of Irish Christian and national identity, the patron Saint Patrick:

> For St. Patrick was himself a Catholic; a Papist, a believer in and assiduous promulgator of, the errors of Romanism; and, as a worshipper of the Body and Blood of Christ under the species of bread and wine in the Adorable Sacrifice, was, of course, according to the teachings of Protestantism, an idolater. How ridiculous then would it not be for Protestants to seek admission into a Society bearing the name of, and honouring as its patron, one whom, if consistent, they must look upon as an idolater, and a promulgator of error? And, if ridiculous on the part of Protestants to seek admission into a Saint Patrick's Society--a society designated by the name of a Popish Saint--how monstrous would it not be

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[19]Unfortunately, the grievances alluded to in the True Witness article, and enumerated in the Colonial Advertiser, have been lost to time: the extant collection of this paper does not include the year 1856.

> on the part of Catholics to accede to their ridiculous request? A "St. Patrick's Society" is not only a national, but a religious, Society--or why the name of St. Patrick?
> ....No! If Irish Protestants want to form themselves into a Society, they are welcome to do so; but then let it be under a proper designation....Besides, have not the Irish Protestants Orange Societies already? Are not these enough for them, without their seeking to force themselves into Catholic Societies, such as those bearing the glorious name of St. Patrick must be, if true to their principles? No! No! it is impossible to serve God and mammon; to be at one and the same time a member of a St. Patrick's Society, and a Protestant.

A few weeks later, on April 11, 1856, the *True Witness* reported on "the most cheering accounts of the progress of this truly Catholic and therefore--in the noblest sense of the word--truly National Society"; it reported that one hundred new members had been added to the rolls, confirming its report of a week earlier that the "ranks of the new Saint Patrick's Society" were "filling up fast".[20] The Saint Patrick's Day dinner was held in April, 1856 at O'Meara's restaurant--a relatively quiet affair, owing to its rather hasty organisation. On July 29th, Dr. Howard sent a letter to "Ignatius, Lord Bishop of Montreal", asking, in fulfilment of Father Dowd's directives, for Episcopal approbation of the Society's new Constitution:

> We would assure your Lordship of our firm adherence to Holy Mother Church, and obedience to Christ's Vicar, whom may God and his Blessed Mother protect against his and our enemies. And to Your Lordship, as our Chief Pastor officiator by the Holy See, over this Diocese, we offer our filial obedience...
> We beg leave to present your Lordship with a copy of our Constitution, as approved of by our own reverend clergy of Saint Patrick's Church and by his Lordship the Administrator of the Diocese during your Lordship's absence whose kindness and consideration towards us we beg most humbly and may almighty God's blessing (be) upon him....[21]

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[20] *True Witness*, April 4, 1856.
[21] from a letter of October 23, 1856, deposited in the collection of the Saint Patrick's Society at the Archives of the Archevêché de Montréal

In mid-August, the Archbishop replied to Howard's letter, offering his apologies for the delay in responding, and noting that, as he had just arrived home from a transatlantic voyage to Rome, there were many pressing matters to which he was first obliged to attend. He also thanked the Society for their prayers as he was away, noting that one of his colleagues had perished on a similar Atlantic crossing. "J'éprouve un véritable bonheur en voyant que votre Société de St-Patrice a un but aussi religieux que national", Bourget wrote, expressing his satisfaction that the essential character of the Irish nation was "la foi catholique"[22]. Bourget's response continued in this vein, intertwining the Catholic faith of the Irish "nation" with the mission and character of the new Society.

At the same time as the Saint Patrick's Society was being reconstituted, under clerical patronage, around an ethno-religious category, the "expelled" members of the society were constituting themselves homologously in a "Protestant" Irish national society. Invitations began circulating in the Irish Protestant community in early April announcing a meeting to establish a "Hibernian Benevolent Society"[23]. In early May, the papers reported the establishment of an Irish Protestant Society, embracing "all persons not being Catholics", under the aegis of two members of the Protestant clergy, the Unitarian Minister John Cordner and the Anglican priest A. Digby Campbell[24]. The new Irish Protestant Benevolent Society had as its first president Benjamin Workman, of the prominent Montreal family that had once featured on the rolls of the Saint Patrick's Society.

The Protestants energetically protested their "expulsion" from the Society. At the April meeting of the Irish Protestants of the city, with several hundred in attendance, R.D. Collins rose to address the assembly; the *Transcript* later reported his remarks:

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[22]from a letter of November 21, 1856, deposited in the collection of the Saint Patrick's Society at the Archives of the Archevêché de Montréal

[23]Collard, The Irish Way, p. 14.

[24]*True Witness*, May 2, 1856.

> ..he said, he believed all the benefit societies of Montreal relieved all who came to them, irrespective of creed; but the St. Patrick's Society, by its recent acts, have made it impossible for their fellow countrymen to unite with them. He did not believe they would gain much by it. He asked, if because we cannot go to St.Patrick's Church, we are to be deprived of the privileges of Irishmen! Though he lived here he looked with pride and satisfaction to his native land. He was certain that a Society such as it is proposed to form this evening was greatly wanted and would do a great deal of good[25].

At first, the assembled men agreed upon the name of the "Hibernian Benevolent Society", but the *Transcript* reported, "There was a Hibernian Society already in the city, and if we did not put the word Protestant there would be no distinction, and a Protestant emigrant landing in this city in distress would not know which Society to apply to". The assembly then elected Richard MacDonnell to draw up a constitution within two weeks. Taking the podium, MacDonnell accepted the task, then turning to the events of the previous months, expressed relief that previous speakers had refrained from "harsh and bitter remarks", and "sorrow" for the course of events which had led to the disruption of the Society. The *Transcript* reported MacDonnell's criticism of the newly reconstituted Saint Patrick's Society, which had set "Irishmen of different religions" against each other, so that "those who formerly participated together in national festivities" were now estranged. The events of the past two months had "excited public attention, and was the source of sincere regret among the liberal-minded of all creeds"; MacDonnell continued:

> The leading feature of this Saint Patrick's Society was its intolerance and compete exclusion of Irish Protestants from membership...He felt assured that there existed no man possessing an Irish heart who did not in secret, if not in public, repudiate such exclusiveness, and who would not contrast such intolerance with the past days of former Irish Societies, when members of all creeds assembled and marched in harmony through our public streets. What national sentiment was it that created this disruption?...A duty was now incumbent on those present to provide means to promote the interests of their fellow countrymen of the Protestant religion. This necessity had been forced upon them by the

[25]*Transcript*, April 12, 1856

> conduct of a majority of their countrymen, and the responsibility could not be shirked...

Never skipping a beat--or an opportunity to cement sectarian division--the *Witness* weighed in on April 16th with its observations of the division:

> The recent, unscrupulous and unwarrantable conduct of the Roman Catholic majority of the Saint Patrick's Society, in making it denominational and thereby excluding the Protestant minority, has provoked able and well merited rebukes from our contemporary the *Protestant*, and from several speakers at a meeting held last Thursday to establish an Irish Protestant Charitable Society. It seems that though the banners and insignias of the Saint Patrick's Society were, to a considerable extent, paid for by former Protestant members, the Roman Catholics have, by the advice of their priests, appropriated the whole to themselves exclusively. Other national societies, such the Saint George's and Saint Andrew's, admit natives of the countries they represent, without question as to creed, and the Saint Patrick's Society, in taking its present narrow sectarian stand, must either intend to affirm that none but Catholics are Irishmen, or that it is no longer a national society. Perhaps with that double-dealing, for which priests are so celebrated, it is to be commended as a national society when it suits them (when, for instance they are asking an act of incorporation for it, with large powers to hold property), and as a Roman Catholic society at all other times.

The constitution of the Irish Protestant Benevolent Society homologously with the "Catholic Society" demonstrated the realignment of ethnic categories by 1856. Later, Protestants would more generally unite behind broader social objectives, transcending ethnic and denominational boundaries in the establishment of a variety of confessionally-based "Protestant institutions". By 1864, the various "Protestant" national fraternal groups--the Saint Andrew's, Saint George's and Irish Protestant Benevolent societies--proposed the co-operative establishment of a United Protestant Immigrants' Home.

By the 1840s, the Saint Patrick's Society had ceased to function as a vehicle for advancing a middle-classs interest; it was too divided to generate precepts of mutual interest. Catholic ultramontanism anchored the new Society to a set of civic principles

and to an authoritarian aegis which could provide both discipline to its ranks and direction to its energies. Institution-building was set to proceed along confessional lines, and the increasing integration of the national societies into larger Montreal "Protestant" and "Catholic" projects augured a half-century of ethno-religious privatism.

Conclusion

The narrative of the Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal, as it existed and evolved in the years from its inception in 1834 to its dissolution twenty-two years later, viewed in terms of personalities and events, and explored through the more particularistic lens of micro-history, is replete with all the drama of an institution dominated by mercurial men and developing in tumultuous times. On this count alone, it is a valuable snapshot of early- and mid-nineteenth-century Montreal and an instructive corrective to the narrative of the Irish in Quebec. Seen in broader terms, and allied with the narrative of civil society and ethno-religious realignment, the Society can be seen as part of larger processses, some particular to Montreal society, some to colonial and British-influenced culture, and some no less than world-historical.

There is a tendency in many discussions of ultramontanism, Irish, French Canadian or otherwise, to focus on mercurial personalities: Lartigue and Bourget in the case of the French Canadian clerics, Dowd especially in the literature of Irish Montreal; likewise, the narrative of ultramontane ascendancy in Ireland has frequently coalesced around the dynamic figure of Paul Cullen, and in England around Cardinal Wiseman. The precise reasons behind this historiographical development are unclear, although it would seem that it tends to co-opt hierarchical and authority structures in theological Catholicism, attributing a special supra-communal energy and agency to the priests in much the same way as Catholic dogma does; the priestly classes are seen as a supreme source of authority, and in Catholic history, as the source of social action. Historiography has yet to break the yoke of both theological Catholicism and rhetorical anti-Popery by looking beyond, around or under the priestly figure for the locus of confessional community. The historical interpretation of localised ultramontanism has

left historians scrambling to find little Pio Nonos for each community under study, in the belief that a study of that man may shed the most light on the institutional and intellectual developments of the community to which he ministered. By introducing the concept of "taxonomic space" in the study of ethnic processes in nineteenth century Montreal, I have endeavoured to place the broader context of confessionalisation in more prominent relief, but not at the expense of the importance of articulators of ethnic identity and consciousness, who, like the men who provided the money and mortar of Saint Patrick's Church, played a crucial role in defining the boundaries of the Irish Catholic category.

The Saint Patrick's Society's progress through the Rebellions and the politics of the 1840s, to the sectarian debates of the 1850s, is closely allied to the narrative of realignment both within and outside the Irish cohorts, the narrative of ultramontane consolidation, Protestant evangelicalism, and processes of boundary-redrawing within the immigrant cohort. The middle-class association, examined within the matrix of economic and social processes and voluntarism, can also offer a compelling case for the study of more world-historical processes of civil society and middle-class corporatism within the vagaries of an emerging political and economic order. But to see these in isolation from allied processes of community reformulation within ethnic units privileges the world-historical narrative over its localised manifestation, and understates the logic of internal transformations within the associational network linked to broader changes in the demographic, political, economic and intellectual environment.

The collapse of the old Saint Patrick's Society was also a consequence of the Irish middle classes's high level of acculturation and integration into the culture and institutions of the wider community; without the discipline afforded by real mutual economic interest, and with opportunities available to them in other arenas, members were not dependent on their society to offer prestige and status which were available to them elsewhere. Less affluent members of the Irish community, as J.I. Cooper has

documented, were tied by economic exigency to "national" institutions with meaningful and more stable mutual benefit functions[1]. Although the authority of the church, and the appeal to discipline and civicism inspired by the dictates of ultramontanism, provided some ordering principles to the Society, it remained factionalised. In 1864, an independent Saint Patrick's Benevolent Society was established, with a view to providing mutual aid for members of the Irish Catholic parish community. By 1869, it was a theatre for factional strife, with Father Dowd resigning from its administration, bitter letters of protest passing between members and administrators, and calls for intervention by the Bishop. The institution struggled through the early 1870s under the strains of internecine conflict before it collapsed.

When the men of the Saint Patrick's Society first marched through the streets of Montreal, they were making powerful claims to civic tradition, and to space within an expanding civil society. Their claim to a set of civic virtues compelled members to take up arms against the *patriotes* in 1837-38, but in the aftermath of the Rebellions, the Society's members struggled to find a resonant basis for advancing collective action. The fragmentation of middle-class identities, and the "hollow" nature of the Irish ethnicity to which it appealed led that Society into decline, and it was to lie in waste for nearly a decade before the ultramontane resurgence breathed life and purpose into the moribund institution, giving it, after reconstitution, claim again to a resonant civic identity--one closely allied with the Church's elaboration in the social sphere and consonant with broader social and cultural cleavages taking form by mid-century. The new Catholic society resurrected the paraphernalia, regalia, processions, and language of civic virtue, but it marshalled them in support of a markedly different concept of community: the stuff of middle-class association had changed, but its trappings remained the same.

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[1]See J.I. Cooper "The Quebec Ship Labourers' Benevolent Society", Canadian Historical Review, vol.XXX, no. 4 (1949), pp. 336-343.

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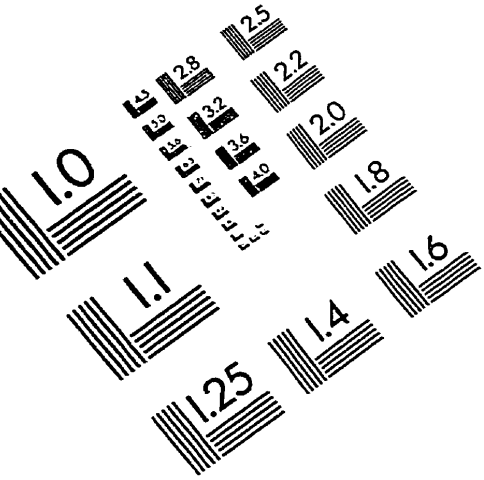

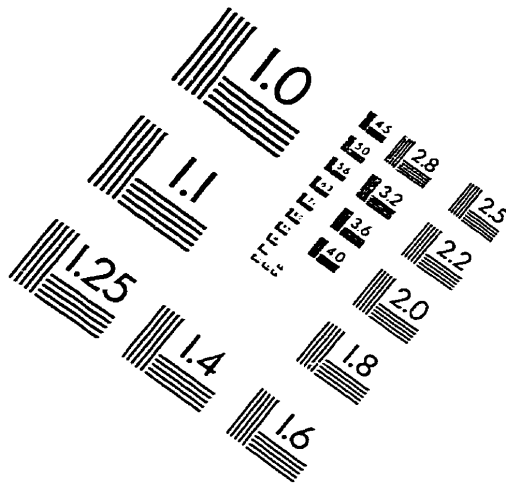

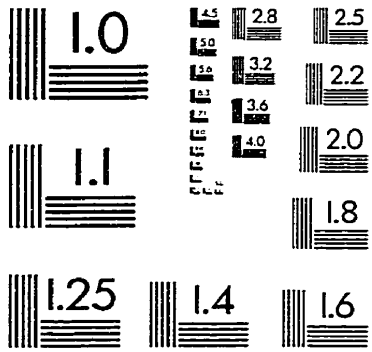

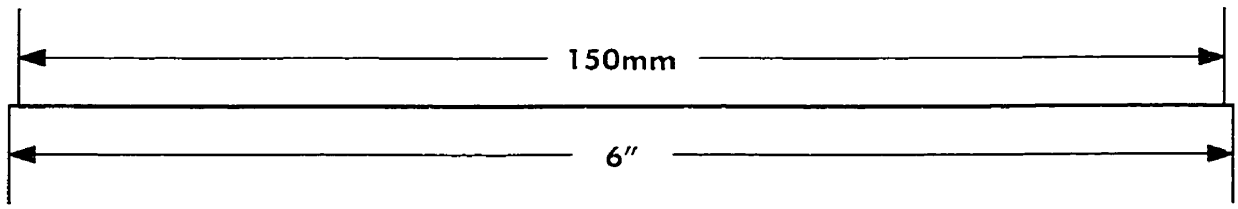

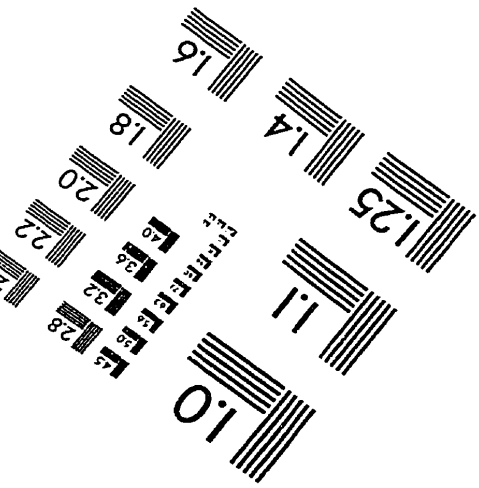

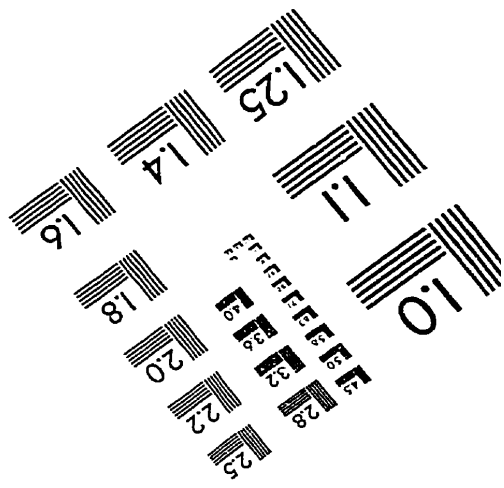

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