PORTS OF RECALL:
MEMORY OF THE GREAT IRISH FAMINE
IN LIVERPOOL AND MONTREAL

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Abstract

This dissertation is a transnational and comparative study of Great Famine memory from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century. It examines how Irish groups in Liverpool and Montreal commemorated the Great Famine (1846-51), a catastrophe that claimed the lives of one million people through starvation and disease and spurred the emigration of another two million. As the busiest British and Canadian urban ports of entry during the Famine migration, Liverpool and Montreal struggled to cope with the influx of Irish refugees, particularly in 1847 when typhus epidemics struck both cities, killing thousands, despite the implementation of quarantine measures. Though most of the Irish newcomers out-migrated subsequently, memory of the devastation wrought settled into popular historical consciousness. In the century spanning the Famine's jubilee and sesquicentenary, Irish groups on both sides of the Atlantic kept Famine memory alive through political rhetoric, religious rituals, and historical commemoration, often recalling it as the traumatic genesis of Irish emigration and mobilizing its memory in service of various forms of Irish nationalism.

This study, however, demonstrates that Famine commemoration, which took different forms in the changing social and spatial contexts of Liverpool and Montreal, functioned as more than a conduit for the transmission of Irish or Irish-American nationalism. The Famine was a memory through which collective identities—ranging from the local to the diasporic—were generated, maintained, and modified over time. During the most intense phases of commemoration, which coincided with the Famine's

50th and 150th anniversaries, groups in Montreal and Liverpool used this memory to bolster claims to political power, to elevate their socio-economic standing, to strengthen local, national, and diasporic solidarities, and, most recently, to combat world hunger. Yet this study also highlights the different ways in which the Famine was commemorated and the distinct Irish identities that were organized in Montreal and Liverpool, as these cities were affected uniquely by their proximity to the people and politics of Ireland and its diaspora, processes of urban restructuring, shifting socio-economic relations, the changing role of Irish Catholic parishes as centres of community, and the creation of sites of memory and memorial practices.

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Introduction

Famine Migration and Memory

> The emigration of this year having been marked by a depravity, seldom or never recorded in the shipment of living.
>
> —*Report of the Board of Health for the City of Montreal*, 12 August 1847

> The burning memory of horrors…seems to overwhelm all other recollection.
>
> —A.M. Sullivan, 1878[1]

James Flood was just five years old when he was swept up in the massive migratory wave that carried more than one million people out of Ireland during the Great Famine (1846-51).[2] Facing starvation and disease at the height of the crisis in May 1847, the young boy and his family, along with 465 other evicted tenants from the Strokestown estate in County Roscommon, participated in a landlord-assisted emigration scheme that took them on a harrowing three-month journey through the Irish midlands, over the Irish Sea to Liverpool, and across the north Atlantic to Montreal.[3] While the story of James Flood's

[1] A.M. Sullivan, *New Ireland* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1878).
[2] Another 900,000 Irish emigrants followed suit between 1851 and 1855. Factoring in the more than one million people who died during the Famine years, Ireland's population of 8.5 million in 1845 was reduced by over one third in the following decade.
[3] Information pertaining to Mary and James Flood Sr., their nine children (Patrick, James Jr., Ellen, Michael, Mary Jr., Catherine, Edward, Bridget, and Margaret), and the other Strokestown tenants evicted in 1847, is accessible through a database of immigrants on Grosse-Île, compiled by Parks Canada from records in several archives, including The Famine Museum, Strokestown

particular ordeal is as yet untold, the experiences of privation, eviction, displacement, and disease to which he and many of his fellow Famine migrants were exposed in "Black '47" have long been enshrined in public memory as the archetypical Famine tragedy.

In Montreal and Liverpool—the two Atlantic ports hit hardest by the exodus from Ireland—the Famine has featured prominently in Irish narratives of remembrance as the foundational moment for Irish Catholics and their representative migratory experience. Since the late nineteenth century, Irish Catholic groups in both cities have periodically laid claim to public space, erected monuments, and organized commemorations recalling the Famine experience. These acts of remembrance were designed ostensibly to honour the memory of those who died and often to affirm nationalist historical readings of the Famine that held British authorities responsible for allowing a crop failure to lead to mass starvation and emigration. However, this thesis argues that Famine remembrance was actually a far more complex, contingent, and contentious process that took on different forms in changing circumstances from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century. Through close analysis of commemorative discourses and the socio-political and spatial contexts in which they were negotiated, my dissertation explores how Famine memory was invoked to construct a range of local, national, and transnational identities that took unique and sometimes overlapping forms in Irish diasporic settings on both sides of the Atlantic.

Park, County Roscommon, Ireland. See Library and Archives Canada. "Immigrants at Grosse-Île," http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/grosse-ile-immigration/index-e.html (accessed 8 May 2009).

First Came the Floods

Before the potato blight struck in 1845, James Flood's family had eked out a bare subsistence as rundale farmers in the townland of Cregga on the Strokestown estate. They held joint tenancy with their neighbours on land sublet annually from one of the estate's middling farmers. This arrangement ensured that each household had access to an outfield for the collection of bog peat and turf, as well as their own small tillage plot for the cultivation of potatoes: the single food source on which they, like most of Ireland's pre-Famine rural poor, depended for their survival.[4] When not engaged in the intensive labour required to maintain their lazy beds, the eleven members of the Flood family cooked, ate, and slept in a cramped cabin adjacent to their potato patch. Referred to as "hovels…of the most abject description" by one contemporary commentator, these rudimentary dwellings, with their mud floors and sod roofs, appeared as rough outcrops across Ireland's rural landscape, offering their "miserably clothed" inhabitants only the most basic shelter.[5]

Such poverty was endemic in Ireland in the 1840s, particularly in the west and south-west, where there was an exceptionally heavy dependence on the potato crop.[6] A

[4] On the eve of the Famine, the potato was the main food source for over half of Ireland's population. The Floods were among the 3.3 million smallholders, cottiers, and labourers that relied almost exclusively on the potato for sustenance.
[5] Isaac Weld, *Statistical Survey of the County of Roscommon Drawn up under the Directions of the Royal Dublin Society* (Dublin: R. Graisberry, 1832), 477.
[6] The Famine was experienced differently in the various regions of Ireland. The poor, potato-dependent areas of the south and west of Ireland were most devastated, with Mayo, Sligo, Roscommon and Galway the counties worst affected. The Munster counties and the north midlands were also stricken, but Dublin, south Leinster, and east Ulster, where the economies

century of rapid population growth, most intense in the poorest areas of Connaught and Munster, and the growing number of Anglo-Irish landlords (one-third of whom were absentee) consolidating their estates into large-scale pastures had forced many subsistence farmers to subdivide high-rent land into ever diminishing holdings often on rocky or boggy terrain.[7] Moreover, with periodic partial crop failures,[8] dwindling potato supplies in the summer months before the harvest, and other food sources beyond their means,[9] the Floods, like the rest of Ireland's agricultural labourers and cottiers on the eve of the Famine, were accustomed to hardship, experiencing living standards estimated by one historian to be on par with that of Somalia in the early 1990s when it was beset by civil war and famine.[10]

Yet, while conditions in pre-Famine Ireland were certainly dire, Irish reliance on the potato was, as Joel Mokyr notes, a rational response to mass poverty.[11] The potato

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were more varied, had a relatively low mortality rate. See Liam Kennedy, Paul S. Ell, E.M. Crawford, and L.A. Clarkson, *Mapping the Great Irish Famine: A Survey of the Famine Decades* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999).

[7] Ireland's population doubled to 8.5 million between 1780 and 1845, by which time the average density on cultivated land was 700 persons per square mile. See Joel Mokyr and Cormac Ó Gráda, "New Developments in Irish Population History, 1700-1845," *Economic History Review* 37 (1984): 473-88.

[8] Ireland's earlier famines of 1649-52 and 1740-41 were as destructive in relative terms as the Famine of the 1840s. In the century preceding the Great Famine, Ireland did not have to contend with a catastrophic food crisis but did face partial potato crop failures in 1801, 1817, 1822, 1831, 1835-37, 1839, and 1842. Throughout the dissertation I use the term 'the Famine' to refer to the Great Famine (1846-51).

[9] Cormac Ó Gráda, "Ireland's Great Famine. An Overview," in *When the Potato Failed: Causes and Effects of the last European Subsistence Crisis, 1845-1850*, eds. Cormac Ó Gráda, Richard Paping, and Eric Vanhaute (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2007), 45, estimates that income per capita in the rest of the United Kingdom was double that in Ireland at mid-century.

[10] Cormac Ó Gráda, *Black '47 and Beyond: The Great Irish Famine in History, Economy, and Memory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 5-6.

[11] Joel Mokyr, *Why Ireland Starved: A Quantitative and Analytical History of the Irish Economy, 1800-1850* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983), 261.

was a high-yielding crop that was often free from disease and well suited to Ireland's temperate, damp climate.[12] It was also a remarkably nourishing dietary staple. Supplemented by milk, the potato offered Irish labourers, who consumed on average between 10 to 14 lbs of the root per day, sufficient protein and calories, as well as almost all vital vitamins and nutrients.[13] Though in contemporary debates and commentaries the British government and press often denigrated the Irish for their dependence on the lumper potato, a staple food deemed fit for pigs and only the most primitive people,[14] the Irish rural poor were quite robust relative to other European peasants at mid-century.[15]

The dangers of reliance on this root for families like the Floods only became fully apparent with the appearance of a new, unprecedentedly devastating blight in 1845. The fungus, phytophthora infestans, entered European ports aboard ships carrying potatoes from either the northern Andes or the eastern United States and spread rapidly through wind-and water-borne spores across Europe after mid-1845. But nowhere was the ecological crisis more distressing than in Ireland, where the food supply was least diversified. The fungus destroyed one-third of the 1845 harvest in Ireland—a severe shortfall, but one that was endured for a single season without mass starvation. However, when the blight returned with far greater vengeance the following summer, turning

[12] In ideal conditions one acre could yield a harvest of up to 6.5 metric tons of lumper potatoes. Austin Bourke, *The Visitation of God?: The Potato and the Great Irish Famine* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1993), 115.
[13] E. Margaret Crawford, "Dearth, Diet and Disease in Ireland: A Case Study of Nutritional Deficiency," *Medical History* 28, no. 2 (April 1984): 152.
[14] Peter Gray, *Famine, Land and Politics: British Government and Irish Society, 1843-1850* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press), 104.
[15] Cormac Ó Gráda, "The Heights of Clonmel Prisoners, 1845–1849," *Irish Economic and Social History* 19 (1992): 24–33.

almost the entire potato crop pulpy and putrid in the earth, the consequences were catastrophic.[16]

Without sufficient land or time to plant an alternative crop, Ireland's subsistence farmers were soon desperate for sustenance. Incidences of food rioting, sheep- and cattle-stealing, burglary, and robbery rose sharply.[17] Those unable to obtain food by force or graft were driven to eat anything that might offer nourishment: grass, seaweed, rotten potatoes, rancid meat.[18] There were even rumours of cannibalism.[19] However, while parts of Ireland seemed on the verge of complete social disintegration or violent anarchy, the lassitude, despair, and mass mortality brought on by hunger and the scourges of typhus, cholera, and dysentery blunted the threat of mass deviance or defiance.[20]

The last, best hope for most cottiers and labourers—most of whom lacked the resources to emigrate—was Ireland's new and inadequate system of public relief. Initially, the British government established depots in each county from which imported American maize was sold in an effort to lower food prices and stave off hunger, but income was scarce and supplies insufficient. Public work schemes overseen by the Board of Works were also initiated, eventually employing seven hundred thousand people across Ireland, primarily building and repairing roads. However, public works fell far

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[16] Though the blight did not strike in 1847, there was little to harvest, as few potatoes had been sown. The fungus returned in 1848, again ruining almost the entire potato crop.
[17] Cormac Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A New Economic History, 1780-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 203.
[18] Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 285.
[19] *The Times*, 26 May 1849.
[20] The number of deaths in Ireland between 1846 and 1851 is estimated to have been between 1.1 million and 1.5 million, depending on whether the projected number of averted births is counted. See Mokyr, *Why Ireland Starved*, 265-66.

short of offering comprehensive relief. Not only was manual labour beyond the capacity of many, it paid less than a subsistence wage and put labourers at greater risk of contracting diseases.[21] By the spring of 1847, the focus of the relief system moved from public works to food provision. Soup kitchens, initially established by Quakers as well as various Protestant and Catholic churches and later administered by the government, eventually offered a measure of relief to three million people. Yet, despite its relative effectiveness, authorities in Westminster were eager to circumscribe relief spending and dumped the soup scheme by late summer 1847.

Reflecting a general hardening of British opinion regarding the crisis in Ireland, Charles Edward Trevelyan, the assistant secretary to the Treasury and director of government relief in Sir John Russell's Whig administration, insisted that "Irish property must pay for Irish poverty." Guided by their dogmatic adherence to laissez faire and abiding faith in Malthusian Providentialism, which interpreted the potato blight as a divinely delivered corrective to an overpopulated, economically backward, and morally bankrupt agrarian society,[22] Trevelyan and his fellow Whig ideologues focused relief efforts on Ireland's 130 already overwhelmed workhouses, the fiscal burden for which

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[21] Stephen J. Campbell, *The Great Irish Famine: Words and Images from the Famine Museum Strokestown Park, County Roscommon*, (NP. The Famine Museum, 1994), 34. Wages were just 13 pence per day; an average family required 2 to 3 shillings daily to subsist.
[22] See James S. Donnelly, Jr. "'Irish property must pay for Irish poverty': British Public Opinion and the Great Irish Famine," in *Fearful Realities: New Perspectives on the Famine*, eds. Christopher Morash and Richard Hayes (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1996), 60-76; and Peter Gray, "Potatoes and Providence: British Government Responses to the Great Famine," *Bullán: An Irish Studies Journal* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 75-90.

fell upon Irish landowners.[23] This shift in policy led to higher death rates, as disease spread rapidly in overcrowded workhouses.[24] Though some Irish landowners did provide for their dependent tenants, many landlords were either unable or unwilling to bear the expense of mounting poor rates as the number of destitute poor seeking relief in workhouses increased after mid-1847.

Major Denis Mahon of the Strokestown estate was one landlord who opted to evict his tenants in an effort to reduce relief payments. Since 1845, when he inherited a £13,000 debt along with the 9,000-acre estate, Major Mahon had focused on rectifying the financial crisis left him by his predecessors. His land agent and cousin, John Ross Mahon, was convinced that the only way to revitalize the estate was to oversee a large-scale clearance of smallholders who were in arrears with their rent, and for whom the landlord was liable to pay all poor rates. Though initially hesitant to take such drastic action, Major Mahon eventually followed his cousin's recommendations and evicted 3,000 of his tenants, one third of whom were given assisted emigration to British North America.[25]

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[23] The number of landless peasants increased with the introduction of the Gregory Clause in the summer of 1847, which required all relief-seeking tenant farmers occupying more than one-quarter of an acre to surrender their land.

[24] While professional historians continue to dismiss charges of state-sponsored genocide, there is a general consensus that the British government's stubborn adherence to its failed policies intensified the crisis and increased rates of mortality and migration. See, for example, Peter Gray, "Ideology and the Famine," in *The Great Irish Famine*, ed. Cathal Póirtéir (Dublin: Gill & MacMillan, 1995), 102; and Christine Kinealy, *This Great Calamity: The Irish Famine 1845-52* (Roberts Rinehart, Boulder, 1995), 352-53.

[25] Irish landlords evicted approximately 500,000 people between 1846 and 1855. James S. Donnelly Jr., *The Great Irish Potato Famine* (Thrupp, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2001), 229; and Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles,* 287.

The Flood family was among the first contingent of tenants to leave Strokestown in 1847—a group which, according to Major Mahon, included those "of the poorest and worst description, who would be a charge...for the Poor House or for Outdoor Relief."[26] In return for relinquishing their holdings, Major Mahon promised them passage out of Ireland to Quebec, via Liverpool. In 1847, the transatlantic voyage to British North America (whether from ports of departure in Ireland, England, or Scotland) was considerably cheaper than the crossing to the eastern seaboard of the United States.[27] According to the calculations of Mahon's land agent, the fare for the journey from Liverpool to Quebec amounted to less than half the cost of maintaining a tenant in the workhouse for one year. By early May, after trawling for the most affordable passage, Mahon landed a deal with James and William Robinson, Liverpool-based passenger agents with a reputation for exploitative practices and lax safety standards in the emigrant trade.[28]

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[26] "Correspondence of Major Denis Mahon with John Ross Mahon (agent)," April 14, 1847, Ms. 10,102 (2), National Library of Ireland,. Mahon paid £3 2s 6d for each adult emigrant and half that price for children under fourteen, excluding infants who travelled for free. In total, the emigration scheme cost £4,000. The fares from Ireland to Quebec were similarly priced, ranging from £3 to over £5, depending on the port of departure and the amount of provisions provided by the shipping company, but in May 1847 Liverpool to Quebec was the cheapest transatlantic route that Major Mahon could find for his former tenants. See "Major Denis Mahon's Emigration Account, 1847," Ms 10,138, Irish National Library.

[27] Campbell, *The Great Irish Famine*, 40. Emigration to ports on the American eastern seaboard became relatively expensive when U.S. shipping regulations were tightened in the spring of 1847. Yet, as many as 119,000 Irish had the means to migrate to the United States in 1847. The Canadian route was a cheaper alternative for close to 100,000 of the poorest class of emigrants, who, as steerage passengers, were exposed to horrific conditions.

[28] Peter Duffy, *The Killing of Major Denis Mahon* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007), 112.

Two weeks later, the Floods, along with many of their neighbours from Cregga and several hundred other destitute tenants from other townships on the estate,[29] met in Strokestown's market square to gather supplies and begin their journey out of Ireland.[30] Though the estate's land agent, Ross Mahon, reported that the former tenants "expressed themselves much obliged and went cheerfully,"[31] their departure must have been at the very least disorienting, if not distressing, particularly for the majority of them who had never ventured more than a day's journey from home. Nonetheless, the former Strokestown tenants who participated in the assisted migratory scheme likely did believe that emigration—an option otherwise closed to them—was their best chance of escaping the hunger and disease that was devastating their community.

The first stage of their journey out of Ireland offered this already malnourished group of migrants a bitter foretaste of the adversity they would face in the weeks ahead on their transatlantic passage to Quebec. Even with the aid of carts used to convey the infirm, the elderly, and the young (like James Flood), the 150 kilometre trek from Strokestown to Dublin was gruelling. After four days of trudging cross-country and sleeping rough, the Floods and their neighbours arrived on the outskirts of the Irish capital. From there, they were escorted by John Cox, the estate's bully bailiff, directly to Eden Quay on the River Liffey, where Ross Mahon awaited to oversee their passage to

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[29] In *The Freeman's Journal*, 29 April 1848, Bishop George Browne named thirty-two families (155 people) that were cleared from Cregga in 1847. The article, published to draw attention to the hardships faced by tenants on the Strokestown estate, also included a list of the names of 3,006 people who had been evicted from the estate in the previous year.
[30] Robert James Scally, *The End of Hidden Ireland: Rebellion, Famine, & Emigration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 160.
[31] Ross Mahon quoted in Duffy, *The Killing of Major Denis Mahon*, 110.

Liverpool.[32] The cross-channel voyage aboard steam-driven ferries took less than twenty-four hours, but the wild winds and currents of the Irish Sea would have made it seem interminable for the Strokestown migrants, who were packed together tightly on deck and in the holds by ferry operators eager to maximize profits.

Disembarkation at Liverpool's Clarence Dock offered little respite to the beleaguered migrants. They entered Europe's busiest port, with "thousands of hungry and half naked wretches...wandering about, not knowing how to obtain a sufficiency of the commonest food nor shelter."[33] The destitute Irish who arrived en masse in Liverpool during the Famine were easy prey for sharpers and harpies, "the most unscrupulous set of scoundrels" notorious for bilking hapless newcomers to the city of the little they possessed.[34] Though the accommodations in Liverpool that had been arranged for the Floods and their neighbours shielded them somewhat from the dangers of the waterfront, they were exposed to the far greater threat of typhus, which had reached epidemic proportions in the city by May 1847. The disease was especially rampant among "the immigrant Irish who inundated the lower districts,"[35] where they crowded together, "often as many as fifteen in a room, in lodging houses and cellars."[36]

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[32] Scally, *The End of Hidden Ireland*, 181, 189. The firms of Shaw and Sons and Harnden and Company were paid 10s. for the shipment to Liverpool of each of Strokestown's former tenants.
[33] *Liverpool Mercury*, 15 January 1847.
[34] *The Times*, 7 May 1850.
[35] Dr. Duncan, "Liverpool Medical Office of Health's Report, 1850," quoted in Roger Swift, *Irish Migrants in Britain, 1815-1914: A Documentary History* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2002), 96.
[36] Edward Rushton (Liverpool stipendiary magistrate), *Evidence to the Select Committee on Poor Removal, Parliamentary Papers* 1847), quoted in Swift, *Irish Migrants in Britain*, 95.

Though the Strokestown migrants were resident in this "City of Plague" for less than one week,[37] typhus (a deadly, louse-borne bacterial infection) stalked them as they boarded the *Virginius,* a vessel that, like dozens of other two and three mast hulks designed to carry grain or timber, had been hastily converted to capitalize on the lucrative emigrant trade between Liverpool and Quebec.[38] Though a cursory examination at the docks on May 27th revealed "no appearance of disease amongst them," the assistant emigration officer who carried out the inspection later conceded that they were "a less robust, as well as poor class, than usual."[39] Once aboard the *Virginius* they were squeezed into steerage—a dank, insanitary, suffocating space below the foredeck less than six feet in height. These cramped quarters were an ideal breeding ground for dysentery and typhus, which reportedly claimed lives even before the vessel had left the Mersey estuary.[40]

During their two-month passage from Liverpool to Quebec—the longest of its kind in 1847—the Floods and their shipmates struggled to survive on paltry provisions while lodged in the bowels of the *Virginius*, which *The Times* compared to "The Black Hole of

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[37] Dr. Duncan, "Liverpool Medical Office of Health's Report, 1850."
[38] On 30 May, two days after the *Virginius* set sail, another one hundred Strokestown tenants left Liverpool for Quebec aboard *Erin's Queen*. In mid-June the *Naomi* and *John Munn* sailed down the Mersey with the remainder of the Strokestown emigrants destined for Grosse-Île. Conditions on board these three vessels were comparable to that of the *Virginius*. Of the close to one thousand tenant farmers who were given assisted passage from Strokestown to Quebec (via Liverpool) in May and June 1847 over half (as many as 511) died either en route or while in quarantine.
[39] Duffy, *The Killing of Major Denis Mahon*, 114.
[40] See Dr. George M. Douglas' 1847 Immigration Report, quoted in Michael Quigley, "Grosse Île: Canada's Famine Memorial," in *The Great Famine and the Irish Diaspora in America* ed. Arthur Gribben (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 142.

Calcutta."[41] One chronicler of the Famine migration, Stephen de Vere, a Limerick landowner and social reformer, bore witness to a similarly horrifying situation aboard another vessel carrying Famine refugees bound for Quebec that summer:

> Hundreds of poor people, men, women, and children of all ages, from the drivelling idiot of ninety to the babe just born, huddled together without light, without air, wallowing in filth, and breathing a fetid atmosphere, sick in body and despair at heart, the fevered patients lying between the sound in sleeping places so narrow as almost to deny them the power of indulging, by a change of position, the natural restlessness of the disease, by their agonized ravings disturbing those around them and predisposing them, through the effects of the imagination, to imbibe the contagion; living without food or medicine except as administered by the hand of casual charity, dying without the voice of spiritual consolation.[42]

Conditions on the *Virginius* were at least as desperate, as typhus spread rapidly among the Strokestown emigrants. Daily, corpses were hauled up from the holds, covered in old sails or meal-sacks stitched together, weighted down, and then "buried in the deep without the rites of the Church."[43] James Flood was spared this unceremonious end, but was there to watch as three of his elder siblings (Bridget, Edward, and Mary Jr.) fell victim to typhus and were dropped overboard.[44]

By the time the *Virginius* laid anchor in the St. Lawrence River next to the Grosse-

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[41] *The Times*, 17 September 1847.

[42] Stephen De Vere, "Letter to the Select Committee on Colonization from Ireland (30 November 1847)," in *The Elgin-Grey Papers, 1846-1852, Volume IV*, ed. Sir Arthur G. Doughty (Ottawa: J.O. Patenaude, 1937), 1341-1342. In the hope of stimulating interest in reforming the Passenger Act, De Vere submitted to the British legislature a report on his voyage, which was forwarded by the Earl Grey, the Colonial Secretary to Governor-General Lord Elgin.

[43] Ibid., *1342*.

[44] *The Morning Chronicle*, 24 December 1847. The newspaper printed the names of emigrants who died on ships en route to Quebec in 1847.

Île quarantine station on July 28th, one third of its passengers had met the same fate.[45] The glut of newly arrived Irish refugees being processed at Grosse-Île meant that the *Virginius* spent thirteen days in the quarantine cue awaiting inspection, during which time another nineteen passengers perished.[46] When inspectors finally came on board they discovered 186 passengers and crew suffering from typhus and ordered their hospitalization on the quarantine island, where as many as ninety of them eventually died and were buried.[47] Those on the *Virginius* who had escaped the ravages of typhus appeared in little better shape. Dr. George Douglas, medical superintendent of Grosse-Île, described them as "ghastly yellow looking spectres, unshaven and hollow cheeked, and, without exception, the worst looking passengers I have ever seen; not more than six or eight were really healthy and able to exert themselves."[48]

James Flood was among the few who emerged from the hold of the wooden hulk in relatively good health, though his family was likely less fortunate. At some point between their disembarkation from the *Virginius* at Grosse-Île and James' arrival at Montreal's waterfront several days later, the Flood family became separated from their second youngest. It is possible that James was removed from his parents and five surviving siblings during the chaotic sorting process at the quarantine station or at some stage in the voyage upriver aboard one of the crowded steamers, which carried 70,000

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[45] The *Virginius* was one of 441 ships that sailed up the St. Lawrence River between May and November 1847. Of the 398 ships that stopped for inspection on Grosse-Île, seventy-two (carrying over 30,000 predominantly Irish passengers) sailed from the port of Liverpool.
[46] Two days after the *Virginius* entered quarantine the *Naomi*—another ship whose holds were weighed down by former Strokestown tenants—arrived at Grosse-Île after a 45-day crossing.
[47] *The Times*, 9 September 1847.
[48] Dr. George M. Douglas quoted in *The Globe*, 4 August 1847.

Irish migrants, along with a typhus epidemic, to Montreal that summer. It is equally plausible that members of the Flood family were afflicted with typhus upon their arrival in Montreal and were among the 13,189 Irish emigrants who were hospitalized in the fever sheds of Pointe Saint-Charles in the southwest of the city, and possibly among the 6,000 who died there and were buried in unmarked graves.[49] Whatever the precise circumstances that led to him losing his family, we know that James, like hundreds of other young Famine migrants, found himself alone in Montreal, separated from kin and community by distance or death.[50]

Like many of Montreal's Irish orphans in 1847, James was given refuge in the Roman Catholic Church, in his case with the Grey Nuns in the Hôpital Général des Soeurs-Grises.[51] Though fragmentary records make it impossible to verify the duration of his stay with the Nuns, the inclusion in the 1859-60 city directory of an eighteen year-old James Flood, living at 14 Grey Nun Street (next to the Hospital orphanage), raises the

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[49] André Charbonneau and André Sévigny, *Grosse-Île: A Record of Daily Events* (Ottawa: the Minister of Canadian Heritage, 1997), 15.

[50] In a letter to Earl Grey sent on November 20, 1847, Lord Elgin reported that "nearly 1000 immigrant orphans have been left during the season at Montreal, and a proportionate number at Gross Isle, Quebec, Kingston, Toronto, and other towns." Theodore Walrond, C.B. ed., *Letters and Journals of James, Eighth Earl of Elgin, 1811-1863* (London: J. Murray, 1872), http://infomotions.com/etexts/gutenberg/dirs/1/0/6/1/10610/10610.htm (accessed 24 October 2009).

[51] Library and Archives of Canada (hereafter cited as LAC), "Semi-monthly Return of Roman Catholic Orphan Children in Charge of His Lordship the Roman Catholic Bishop of Montreal," RG 4, C 1, vol. 208: file 3699. This record lists orphans who came under the care of the Catholic Church prior to 15th September. Some found homes with local families, while others, like James, whose condition was noted as "well," were still under the care of Church authorities on the 15th October. Les Soeurs de la Providence also cared for Irish orphans in 1847, as did a number of Protestant groups. Before the Hôpital Général des Soeurs-Grises opened its doors to orphans, James likely spent his first few weeks in the city at Sainte Brigitte's Refuge in the McGrath house on Murray Street, followed by a six-month stint in a house on St. Gabriel's farm in Pointe Saint-Charles.

likelihood that the five year-old was taken in by the Grey Nuns in 1847 and as a young man thirteen years later found his own home very near his former guardians.[52] Until 1875, at which point his name vanishes from the public record, James Flood worked as a labourer and remained within the familiar confines of Montreal's waterfront neighbourhood, residing at five different addresses—all within one kilometre of the dock on which he was deposited in 1847 and the nearby hospital that became his adoptive home.

After the Floods

While James Flood survived the traumatic transatlantic passage from Liverpool to Montreal, it is impossible to rescue him from the "condescension of posterity" that obscures much of his life as an immigrant. However, almost immediately upon its arrival in Quebec, the *Virginius*, along with several other of the 'coffin ships' carrying assisted emigrants to British North America in 1847,[53] emerged as potent symbols of the Famine

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[52] Annuaires Lovell de Montréal et sa banlieue (1842-1999), http://bibnum2.bnquebec.ca/bna/lovell/index.html (accessed 22 September 2009). The three other Floods listed in the Montreal directory of 1859-60 bore no relation to James.

[53] Though the majority of the 1.5 million Irish migrants who made it to the United States between 1845 and 1855 were spared the horrific conditions faced by James Flood's family, the "coffin ships" that carried the roughly 100,000 Irish refugees to British North America in "Black '47" have long been emblematic of the Famine catastrophe. The four vessels sent out by Major Mahon from Strokestown to Quebec (via Liverpool) and those carrying Lord Palmerston's evicted tenants from Sligo became the best known of the 1847 "coffin ships." Four months later, the assassination of Major Mahon by former tenants raised a furore in the Irish and British press, drawing further attention to the plight of the Strokestown peasants and the loss of their relatives exiled to British North America. See Donal A. Kerr, *'A Nation of Beggars'?: Priests, People, and Politics in Famine Ireland, 1846-1852*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 92-107; and Scally, *The End of Hidden Ireland*, 38-40.

tragedy that was mobilized by nationalists to denounce English rule in Ireland.[54] In subsequent years, especially following the publication in 1860 of exiled Young Irelander and journalist John Mitchel's *Ireland's Last Conquest (Perhaps)*,[55] this particularly painful phase of Famine migration became enshrined in Irish-diasporic nationalist memory as illustrative of the malevolence and genocidal intent of the British government and Anglo-Irish landowners who were charged with robbing Ireland's rural poor of their food, turfing them from their potato patches, and expelling them from their homeland.[56]

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[54] See Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 179-181; and Ó Gráda, "Making Irish Famine History in 1995," *History Workshop Journal*, 42 (Autumn 1996): 94. Only 6,000 assisted migrants made their way from Ireland to British North America in 1847. See Mark G. McGowan, *Death or Canada: The Irish Famine Migration to Toronto, 1847* (Toronto: Novalis Publishing Inc, 2009), 27.

[55] Thomas D'Arcy McGee, *History of the Irish Settlers in North America from the Earliest Period to the Census of 1850* 1851. 6th ed. (Boston: P. Donahoe, 1855), was one of the first Irish nationalist writers to highlight the culpability of British authorities for the tragedy of Famine and forced emigration. But successive generations of nationalist writers were particularly influenced by Mitchel's interpretation, most notably, John Francis Maguire, *The Irish in America* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1868); Canon John O'Rourke, *The History of the Great Famine of 1847 with Notes of Earlier Irish Famines* (Dublin: Boyce, 1875); Charles Gavan Duffy, *Four Years of Irish History, 1845-9* (London: Cassell, Potter, Galpin and Co., 1883); Michael Davitt, *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland or the Story of the Land League Revolution* (London and New York: Harper and Bros., 1904). Mitchel's influence extended into popular histories published in the latter half of the twentieth-century, including Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger, 1845-1849* (London: Old Town Books, 1962); Robert Kee, *The Green Flag* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1972); and Thomas Gallagher, *Paddy's Lament, 1846-1847: Prelude to Hatred* (Dublin: Word River Press, 1985). Though there are differences of emphases among these accounts of the Famine, there is a common interpretive thread running through them: large-scale eviction, emigration of poor Catholic Irish farmers, and mass mortality were a consequence of British misgovernment.

[56] John Mitchel, *The Last Conquest of Ireland (Perhaps)*, ed. Patrick Maume (1860 repr., Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2005), 191, argued that the English government and Irish landlords, eager to limit population and consolidate holdings in Ireland, forced millions into exile from their homeland, while also shipping out five times the amount of food that would have fed the Irish during the Famine. For a discussion of how Mitchel, in organizing Irish identities, called upon the Famine as the greatest example of Britain's colonial tyranny see See G. Kearns, "'Educate that Holy Hatred': Place, Trauma and Identity in the Irish Nationalism of John Mitchel," *Political Geography* 20 (2001): 885-911.

The bitter memory of starvation, eviction, and exile was thereafter kept alive in diasporic centres through historical, political, and religious writings and rhetoric, and the commemorative undertakings of a range of Irish organizations (most often fraternal), representing various strands of Irish nationalism.

Yet while James Flood's story can be read as another rendering of the Famine narrative that has long underpinned American-dominated Irish-diasporic nationalism,[57] the account of his traumatic migration to Montreal, by way of Liverpool, draws attention to the profound impact that Irish migrants had upon the two busiest Canadian and British ports of entry during the Famine. No other large urban centres received as many destitute Famine migrants in proportion to their populations as did Montreal or Liverpool. Of the close to 80,000 Irish migrants who sailed for the port of Quebec during the summer and fall of 1847, roughly 70,000 poured into Montreal, an influx that exceeded the resident population by 20,000.[58] The deluge of Famine migrants into Liverpool was far more intense and unremitting. Between 1846 and 1851 over one million Irish took advantage of

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[57] Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles,* 6, basing his conclusions on the analysis of five thousand letters and memoirs, argues that the spectre of the Famine, forced emigration, and English misrule loomed large in the collective consciousness and nationalist politics of Irish America, even though "comparatively few emigrants were compelled by force or famine to leave Ireland." The Irish-American narrative of emigration as exile has influenced but not defined Famine remembrance in diasporic centres outside of the United States.

[58] Of the 106,812 immigrants who set sail for British North America in 1847, close to 100,000 were Irish migrants who left from Irish and British ports. One in five of the Famine migrants sailed for the Maritime colonies (mostly to New Brunswick). The majority (approximately 80,000) embarked on the journey to Quebec. While precise mortality rates are elusive and estimates vary widely, roughly 10,000 died either en route or in quarantine on Grosse-Île. Another approximately 10,000 of the Irish newcomers succumbed to disease as they moved on to Montreal (where 6,000 were buried) and further inland to towns and cities in Canada West, bringing the mortality rate for Irish migrants who set out for British North America in "Black '47" to twenty percent. For a detailed description of the arrival of Irish Famine migrants to Canada see Charbonneau and Sévigny, *Grosse-Île: A Record of Daily Events.*

the inexpensive cross-channel passage, most often in search of a cheap berth on a vessel bound for North America.[59]

The accessibility of Liverpool and Montreal to the poorest class of Irish migrants ensured that both Atlantic port cities—more than any others on the Famine migration route—were exposed to a small-scale version of the destitution and disease decimating the west and south-west of Ireland. In addition to the spate of social problems that arose with the inflow of Irish migrants, both host societies had to contend with typhus epidemics in 1847. The quarantine of Irish migrants in fever sheds and hospitals eventually contained the deadly contagion, but not before it had claimed the lives of thousands of the Famine migrants along with many long-established residents.

Though the threat of disease soon abated and most of the Irish newcomers out-migrated, often to the United States, the mid-nineteenth century influx from Ireland left an indelible impression on both cities. The Famine migrants who remained in Montreal and Liverpool joined existent Irish Catholic communities in working-class waterfront neighbourhoods. Viewed as outsiders in the dominant Protestant cultures of these cities and often resented as interlopers by other groups of Catholics for attempting to wrest control of the Church, the Catholic Irish in both cities developed their own religious, political, and cultural institutions designed to safeguard their standing in their adoptive homes while maintaining connections to their Irish heritage.

Even long after living memory of the mid-century migration had slipped away, the Famine proved resilient in its power to elicit responses that could, at least

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[59] Roughly 1.25 million Irish arrived in Liverpool between 1846 and 1852.

temporarily, unite a wide constituency of Irish in Montreal and Liverpool. In both cities, Irish groups claimed monumental space and carried out acts of remembrance that produced dedicatory ceremonies and an assortment of historical, political, and religious narratives designed to entrench local ethnic solidarity and deepen Irish diasporic connections. While its salience as an historical memory ebbed and flowed over time—rising in importance in the years straddling the turn of the twentieth century, receding at the centenary, and returning with renewed intensity in the 1990s—the Famine was preserved in public memory as the moment of genesis for Irish Catholic diasporic groups in both urban settings.

The enduring power of this memory was evident in the last decade of the twentieth century with the creation of dozens of memorials and an array of commemorative events at sites in Ireland and across the diaspora marking the 150th anniversary of the Great Famine. Though the political controversy that surrounded some of the sesquicentennial acts of remembrance has since faded,[60] several recent acts of

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[60] Chapters three and four of this study examine the debate and discord over the uses of the past that accompanied the late twentieth-century outpouring of commemorative interest in the Famine. In Ireland, questions arose over an alleged Famine diary chronicling the experiences of refugees who sailed on the infamous "coffin ships" in 1847. After two years as a bestseller Gerald Keegan's *The Famine Diary: Journey to a New World* (Dublin: Wolfhound, 1991) was revealed to be an edited version of "The Summer of Sorrow," a fictional account written by a Scottish-born journalist named Robert Sellar that was published in 1895 in the Quebec newspaper *The Canadian Gleaner*. See Jim Jackson, "Famine Diary—The Making of a Bestseller," *The Irish Review* 11 (Winter 1991/1992): 1-8; and Mark McGowan, "Famine, Facts and Fabrication: An Examination of Diaries from the Irish Famine Migration to Canada," *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 33, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 48-55. In the United States, there were protracted arguments about how the Famine history should be incorporated into school curriculums. See Thomas J. Archdeacon, "The Irish Famine in American School Curricula," *Eire-Ireland: Journal of Irish Studies* (Spring-Summer, 2002): 130-154. In Britain, amidst negotiations over the peace process in Northern Ireland, Tony Blair's 1997 Famine letter, which expressed his regret for his

Famine remembrance indicate that the wave of popular and governmental commemorative interest in the Famine that was generated fifteen years ago has yet to break.[61] Whether this sustained popular interest in recollecting the Famine is animated by traditional Irish nationalist politics, by the desire to raise awareness of contemporary hunger and poverty, by an urge to connect with Irish origins, or simply by curiosity about the three million people who either died or were displaced following the appearance of the potato blight in 1845, Irish groups continue to find meaning in what is often remembered as the nineteenth century's greatest catastrophe.

In an attempt to probe the meanings of Famine memory and to explore its construction in two urban settings over the course of a century, this dissertation approaches remembrance of the catastrophe from multiple angles: political rhetoric, religious rituals, and historical commemoration. Close readings of discursive practices and monumental representations reconstructing the Famine, and careful investigation of the changing socio-political circumstances in which they were formulated from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century, show that collective remembrance of the

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predecessors' failure to provide adequate relief to the Irish people, set off a minor political maelstrom. In Canada, controversy raged for four years (1992-96) over whether Parks Canada should construct the national historic site on Grosse-Île as an Irish Famine site. See Mark McGowan, *Creating Canadian Historical Memory: The Case of the Famine Migration of 1847* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 2006).

[61] In mid-May 2009, the Irish government hosted a series of parallel events organized at home (Skibbereen, Co. Cork) and in Canada (Grosse-Île and Toronto) to mark Ireland's second annual National Famine Memorial Day. Three months later, the 1847 migration was again in the commemorative spotlight when the Ancient Order of Hibernians, in partnership with Parks Canada, hosted the centenary celebration of Grosse-Île's Celtic Cross, constructed in 1909 to mark the burial site of over 5,000 Famine migrants.

catastrophe was entwined with the articulation of a range of Irish identities, from the local to the diasporic.[62]

Historiography

Though the Famine has long been central to Irish popular historical consciousness, until the early 1990s the amount of scholarly attention devoted to the catastrophe was remarkably limited. This historiographical trend, which arose with Ireland's historical profession in the 1930s and held sway for the following half century, developed in reaction to the nationalist narratives and political rhetoric that Famine remembrance tended to inspire at home and abroad. The few professional historians in Ireland that did offer academic accounts of the event dismissed the popular notion that "the English created the famine," and avoided drawing direct causal links between the policies of the British government and mass mortality.[63] Their analyses of the Famine generally focused on outlining relief efforts overseen from Westminster, tallying food imports into Ireland, and insisting on the long-term instability of a potato-dependent Irish economy.[64] While recognizing its tragic dimensions, the revisionist historical orthodoxy was to deny the

[62] Identities, according to Roger Rouse, "Questions of Identity: Personhood and Collectivity in Transnational Migration to the United States," *Critique of Anthropology* 15, no. 4 (1995): 351-80, are "generated in, and constructed through, a kind of internal (self-attributed) and external (other ascribed) dialectic conditioned within specific social worlds."
[63] John Mitchel coined the memorable phrase, "The Almighty, indeed, sent the potato blight, but the English created the famine."
[64] See K.B. Nowland, "Foreword" in *The Great Famine: Studies in Irish History, 1845-52*, eds., R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams (New York: New York University Press, 1957); F.S.L. Lyons, *Irish Historical Studies* 53 (March 1964): 7-9; Mary Daly, *Famine in Ireland* (Dublin: Dundalgan Press, 1986); and R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (London: Penguin Books, 1988).

Famine as a watershed moment in Irish history, claiming that the more significant economic and social turning point for modern Ireland began in 1815 with the cessation of the Napoleonic wars.[65] Revisionist historians were also disinclined to view mass emigration during the Famine as the unmitigated disaster of forced exile that successive generations of nationalists had claimed it to be. Reflecting pre-Famine emigration patterns, most of the mid-century migrants were poor (yet not destitute) and left of their own volition, arriving intact in their new communities.[66] Thus, until the early 1990s, most Irish historians chose not to dwell on (or even offer descriptions of) the horrific aspects of Famine emigration—symbolized most powerfully by the 'coffin ships' of 'Black '47' on the Canadian route via Ireland and Liverpool—as they were uncharacteristic of the Famine exodus as a whole and deemed "not relevant" in the larger scheme of Irish emigration between 1800 and 1914.[67]

Revisionism in Ireland has been loosely connected to a general trend of scholarly reassessment over the past thirty years in the historical scholarship examining the Irish abroad that has similarly challenged many of the claims of Irish nationalist history, most notably those relating to the Famine.[68] Historians of the Irish diaspora outside of the

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[65] See Raymond D. Crotty, *Irish Agricultural Production: Its Volume and Structure* (Cork, Cork University Press, 1966); Louis M. Cullen, *An Economic History of Ireland Since 1660* (London, B.T. Batsford, 1972); and Foster, *Modern Ireland.*
[66] South Ulster, east Connaught, and mid-Leinster had the highest emigration rates before and during the Famine.
[67] Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 349-350.
[68] Alan O'Day, "Revising the Diaspora," in *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy*, eds. George Boyce and Alan O'Day (London: Routledge, 1996), 188.

United States,[69] intent on guarding against the undue influence of the Famine-centred Irish-American immigrant story, have sought to invalidate the popular view that the Famine moment inaugurated and epitomized all Irish migratory experience. The recent literature examining the Irish in Britain and Canada has been particularly emphatic in its rejection of the paradigmatic Irish-American narrative. While the Famine signaled the beginning of a period of large-scale immigration to the United States that would continue until the First World War, it marked the end of a period beginning in the late eighteenth century when Britain and its North American colonies were the two most common destinations for Irish migrants. In the latter case, historians have characterized the Famine influx as "aberrant," not only because it was the final phase of mass Irish migration to British North America, but also because, unlike the early nineteenth century influx of mostly Protestant Irish of modest means, the Famine migrants were primarily poor Catholic Irish, a large number of whom were soon destined for an early grave or the United States.[70] Historians of the Irish in Britain have also insisted that the Famine period must not be mistaken for the defining moment in the long history of migration across the Irish Sea, considering that the vast majority of Irish that arrived in British ports during the Famine years soon after sailed on to transatlantic destinations.[71] Moreover, beyond the established Irish communities of London, Liverpool, Glasgow, and Manchester, which

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[69] The historical literature addressing the Irish in Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Latin America has grown considerably since the 1980s.

[70] Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *Irish Emigration and Canadian Settlement: Patterns, Links, and Letters* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 218.

[71] Though most Irish newcomers to Britain during the Famine out-migrated, the Irish-born population of Britain nearly doubled between 1841 and 1851. See Donald M. MacRaild, *Culture, Conflict, and Migration: the Irish in Victorian Cumbria* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998), 8.

were enlarged by immigration between 1846 and 1853, the Famine migrants who remained in Britain were widely dispersed and over time subsumed by the multitude of Irish newcomers through the latter half of the nineteenth and across the twentieth century.[72]

As well as revising the timing and impact of Irish immigration to Canada and Britain, historians have also challenged the traditional characterization of Irish immigrants as impoverished outcasts segregated in ethnic ghettos, an image often projected through narratives of Famine remembrance. Though early examples of the historical literature tended to focus on the economic and cultural impediments facing Irish migrants,[73] since the 1980s a range of studies have been produced examining the nineteenth and early twentieth century processes of Irish immigrant settlement and acculturation in Britain and Canada, which, while highlighting the local and regional

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[72] See Donald Harman Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer*; Donald H. Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer* (Streetsville, Ont: P.D. Meany, 1993), 190; and Patrick Fitzgerald and Brian Lambkin, *Migration in Irish History, 1607–2007* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). Over the course of the twentieth century, 1.6 million Irish left for Britain, more than twice the number that migrated to North America during this period.

[73] Canadian examples include Kenneth Duncan, "Irish Famine Immigration and the Social Structure of Canada West," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 2 (1965): 19-40; Murray W. Nicolson, "The Irish Experience in Ontario: Rural or Urban?" *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* 14, no. 1 (June 1985): 37-45; Clare Pentland, "The Development of a Capitalistic Labour Market in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 25 (November 1959): 450-61; and Michael Cross, "The Shiners' War: Social Violence in the Ottawa Valley in the 1830s," *The Canadian Historical Review* 54 (1973): 1-26. Early histories of the Irish in Britain that highlighted their difficulties adapting to their host societies include J.A. Jackson, *The Irish in Britain* (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1963); Lynn Hollen Lees, *Exiles of Erin: Irish Migrants in Victorian London* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1979); M.A.G. Ó Tuathaigh, "The Irish in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Problems of Integration," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 31 (1981): 149-174; and the first of three volumes edited by Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley: *The Irish in the Victorian City* (Dover, N.H.: Croom Helm, 1985).

diversity of Irish immigrant experiences, emphasize the general upward social mobility of the Catholic and Protestant Irish in their new communities.[74] Despite the distinct national profiles of the Irish in Canada (the majority of whom were Protestants who settled in rural areas) and their counterparts in Britain (who were more likely to be Catholic and live in urban settings), by the 1990s both national historiographies had mapped out the general trajectory from segregation to assimilation, suggesting that by the early twentieth century most Irish, region of settlement and religious affiliation notwithstanding, had integrated into their host societies.[75]

These historiographical developments have been essential in challenging nationalist myths and distinguishing the varied historical experiences of the Irish in

[74] See Donald Akenson, *The Irish in Ontario: A Study in Rural History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984); Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *Irish Emigration and Canadian Settlement*; Bruce S. Elliott, *Irish Migrants in the Canadas: A New Approach* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988); Catherine Anne Wilson, *A New Lease on Life: Landlords, Tenants, and Immigrants in Ireland and Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994); David A. Wilson, *The Irish in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1989); Mark McGowan, *The Waning of the Green: Catholics, the Irish, and Identity in Toronto, 1887-1922* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill's University Press, 1999); David Fitzpatrick, "'A Peculiar Tramping People': the Irish in Britain, 1801-70," in *A New History of Ireland, V: Ireland Under the Union*, ed. W.E. Vaughan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986): 623-60; David Fitzpatrick, "A Curious Middle Place: the Irish in Britain, 1871-1921," in *The Irish in Britain, 1815-1939*, eds. Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (London: Pinter, 1989): 10-59; Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley eds., *The Irish in Victorian Britain, 1815-1939* (London: Pinter, 1989); Graham Davis, *The Irish in Britain, 1815-1914* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1991); Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley, *The Irish in Victorian Britain: The Local Dimension* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999).

[75] For example, Fitzpatrick, "A Curious Middle Place," and Alan O'Day, "The Political Behaviour of the Irish in Great Britain in the later Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," in *The Irish in Britain, 1815-1939*, ed. Graham Davis (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1991, 78, argue that the Irish in Britain, though adopting a variety of adaptive strategies, were largely integrated and assimilated in British society by the end of the First World War. Similarly, Mark McGowan, *The Waning of the Green: Catholics, the Irish, and Identity in Toronto, 1887-1922*, confirms the economic, political, and social integration of second- and third-generation Irish Catholics into Canada's socio-political structures, and Protestant-Catholic harmony by 1920.

Canada and Britain from each another and from those of their counterparts in other parts of the diaspora, particularly the United States. However, some of the most recent studies of the Irish diaspora have complicated the dominant scholarly narrative of waning ethnicity and swift socioeconomic integration, leading historians to look at the Irish beyond the second and third-generation immigrant generation to examine the resilience of Irish ethnicity and the construction of "hyphenated and multiple migrant identities."[76]

Explorations of Irish historical experience have increasingly extended into the still relatively uncharted territory of the twentieth century.[77] While there is general concurrence that a sense of ethnic belonging and identity fades the further removed an immigrant group is from its moment of genesis, historians have begun to devote more attention to the persistence of Irishness, even among those in the diaspora with little connection to the migratory experience.[78] As Donald Akenson argues, "the concept of Irish migration must not be merely physical and must not deal only with the first generation, but must be cultural and must deal with the entire multi-generational ethnic

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[76] John Belchem, "Irish and Polish Migration: Some Preliminary Comparative Analysis," in *Irish and Polish Migration in Comparative Perspective*, eds. John Belchem and Klaus Tenfelde (Essen: Klartext, 2003), 12.

[77] See Steven Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939* (Buckingham, 1993), Mary J. Hickman, *Religion, Class and Ethnicity: the State, the Catholic Church and the Education of the Irish in Britain* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 1995); Donald M. MacRaild, *Irish Migrants in Modern Britain, 1750-1922* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); and Matthew O'Brien, "Irishness in Great Britain and the United States: Transatlantic and Cross-Channel Migration Networks and Irish Ethnicity, 1920-1990" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 2001).

[78] For a discussion of "the current vogue of stressing the persistence of an Irish identity" see Alan O'Day, "A Conundrum of Irish Diasporic Identity: Mutative Ethnicity," *Immigrants & Minorities* 27, nos. 2/3 (July/November 2009): 319.

group."[79] Though there is still some reluctance among historians of the Irish in Canada to extend their scholarly sights more than two generations beyond 1855, the point at which Irish immigration to Canada began its precipitous and continuous decline, there are signs that historians are attempting to grasp the ways in which Irish ethnicity was preserved and modified in Canada further into the twentieth century.[80]

The historical scholarship on the Irish in twentieth century Britain—the primary destination for Irish migrants since the First World War—is much more developed. In this case, historians have had to be conscious of popular and political perceptions of Irish migration in the context of Anglo-Irish enmity (particularly Northern Ireland's protracted troubles),[81] debates about 'whiteness' and assimilation in Britain's multi-ethnic society,[82] as well as the intergenerational interactions of the Irish themselves—between the long-settled, "submerged" Irish in Britain,[83] and others whose migration across the Irish Sea was more recent.[84] Thus historians on both sides of the Atlantic are becoming more attuned to the ways in which Irish migration—both as a concept kept alive in historical

[79] Donald Akenson, *The Irish in Ontario: A Study in Rural History*, 2nd ed. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), xxi. See also Kenny, *The American Irish*, 245.
[80] Mark McGowan, *Creating Canadian Historical Memory*.
[81] Paddy Hillyard, *'Suspect Community': People's Experience of the Prevention of Terrorism Acts in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1993).
[82] See, for example, Bronwen Walter, *Outsiders Inside: Whiteness, Place and Irish Women* (London: Routledge, 2001); and John Belchem, "Comment: Whiteness and the Liverpool-Irish," *Journal of British Studies* 44, no. 1 (January 2005): 146-152.
[83] Mary J. Hickman, "Migration and Diaspora," in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture*, eds. Joe Cleary and Claire Connolly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 127.
[84] Mary J. Hickman, "'Locating' the Irish Diaspora," *Irish Journal of Sociology* 11, no. 2 (2002): 8-26, claims that "plastic Paddy" was a name used by middle class Irish newcomers to Britain in the 1980s to "deny and denigrate the second-generation Irish in Britain."

consciousness and as an ongoing praxis—continued to shape the diaspora over the course of the twentieth century.

As well as expanding the chronological purview of Irish diaspora studies, an increasing number of scholars, following the example of Donald Akenson, Patrick O'Sullivan, and Kevin Kenny, have chosen to explore connections among groups of Irish in a variety of national and regional settings. Their studies fit into a larger body of literature addressing the history of transnational networks of migrants and dispersed ethnic groups, as well as debates concerning cultural hybridity and borderlands.[85] Particular attention has been paid to the fact that the "portability of national identity among migrants has combined with a tendency towards claiming membership in more than one place."[86] This work has inspired an increasing number of comparative studies of migration and settlement that consider the Irish in the wider context of the diaspora.[87]

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[85] See Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004); Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction, 2nd ed.* (London: UCL Press, 2008); and Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen eds., *Migration, Diasporas and Transnationalism* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1999).

[86] Steven Vertovec, "Transnationalism and Identity," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 27, no. 4 (October 2001): 573.

[87] See, for example, Patrick O'Sullivan ed., *The Irish World-Wide: History, Heritage, Identity*, 6 vols. (London: Leicester University Press, 1992-1997); Donald H. Akenson, *Small Differences: Irish Protestants and Irish Catholics, 1815-1922* (Kingston, Ont: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988); Donald H. Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora*; David Noel Doyle, "The Irish in Australia and the United States: Some Comparisons," *Irish Economic and Social History* 16 (1989): 73–94; Patrick O'Sullivan, "Developing Irish Diaspora Studies: A Personal View," *New Hibernia Review* 7 (2003): 130-148. John Belchem, "The Irish in Britain, United States and Australia: Some Comparative Reflections on Labour History," in *Irish in British Labour History*, eds. John Belchem and Patrick Buckland (Liverpool: University of Liverpool, Institute of Irish Studies, 1993): 19-28; Matthew J. Gallman, *Receiving Erin's Children: Philadelphia, Liverpool, and the Irish Famine Migration, 1845-1855* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Malcolm Campbell, "The Other Immigrants: Comparing the Irish in Australia and the United States," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 14, no. 3 (Spring 1995): 3-22; Malcolm Campbell, *Ireland's New Worlds: Immigrants, Politics, and Society in the United States and Australia,*

The concept of diaspora "provides the opportunity to make connections in many directions across and between different communities of the Irish abroad."[88] By comparing groups of migrants and their descendants in different parts of the world, historians can consider the ways in which Irish ethnicity was constituted and represented uniquely in particular regional and national settings, while investigating the transnational characteristics of Irish diasporic identity and experience.

These new approaches to studying Irish ethnicity over time and across urban, regional, and national boundaries suggest the potential of examining and comparing constructions of Irishness in Montreal and Liverpool. As the main urban centres of

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1815–1922 (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008); Alan O'Day, "Imagined Irish Communities: Networks of Social Communication of the Irish Diaspora in the United States and Britain in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Immigrants and Minorities* 23 (2005): 399-424; Alan O'Day, "Irish Diaspora Politics in Perspective: The United Irish Leagues of Great Britain and America, 1900-14," in *Great Famine and Beyond*, ed. Donald M. MacRaild (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2000), 214-39; Donald M. MacRaild, "Crossing Migrant Frontiers: Comparative Reflections on Irish Migrants in Britain and the United States during the Nineteenth Century," in *Great Famine and Beyond*, ed. Donald M. MacRaild, 40-70; Enda Delaney and Donald MacRaild, "Irish Migration, Networks, and Ethnic Identities since 1750: An Introduction," *Immigrants and Minorities* 23, nos. 2–3 (July–November 2005): 127-42; William Jenkins, "Deconstructing Diasporas: Networks and Identities among the Irish in Buffalo and Toronto, 1870-1910," *Immigrants and Minorities* 23 (2005): 359-398; William Jenkins, "Identity, Place, and the Political Mobilization of Urban Minorities: Comparative Perspectives on Irish Catholics in Buffalo and Toronto 1880-1910," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25 (2007): 160-186; William Jenkins, "Remapping 'Irish America': Circuits, Places, Performances," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 28, no. 4 (Summer 2009): 90-99; Kevin Kenny, ed. *New Directions in Irish-American History*, (Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 2003); Kevin Kenny, "Diaspora and Comparison: The Global Irish as a Case Study," *Journal of American History* 90, no. 1 (June 2003): 134-62; Kevin Kenny, "Diaspora and Irish Migration History," *Irish Economic and Social History* 33 (2006): 46-51; Mike Cronin and Daryl Adair, *The Wearing of the Green: A History of St. Patrick's Day*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2002); Matthew J. O'Brien, "Transatlantic Connections and the Sharp Edge of the Great Depression," *Éire-Ireland* 37, nos. 1–2 (Spring–Summer 2002): 38–57.

[88] Mary J. Hickman, "Alternative Historiographies of the Irish in Britain: A Critique of the Segregation/Assimilation Model," in *The Irish in Victorian Britain: The Local Dimension*, eds. Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), 243.

reception for Famine migrants in Britain and its North American colonies, and home to longstanding, Catholic Irish communities with strong nationalist traditions and historical experience of ethnic and sectarian strife, Liverpool and Montreal share some striking historical similarities. From a certain vantage point, these cities appear to have more in common with New York, Boston, and Philadelphia—American urban centres known as Famine-era birthplaces of archetypically embattled Irish Catholic communities—than with most areas of Irish settlement in Canada and Britain. However, this comparative study scratches behind the patina of equivalence (often applied indiscriminately by the brush of Irish American memory) and examines the place of the Famine migration in the cultural memories of the multigenerational Irish in Montreal and Liverpool. In each milieu, Famine remembrance was shaped by the timing and extent of Irish immigration and the shifting political, social, and economic forces unique to the respective urban, regional and national settings. However, through an analysis of the distinctive ways in which the Famine was invoked by the Irish in Liverpool and Montreal, this study also considers the extent to which these two Irish diasporic communities—neither of which has fit easily into their respective national historiographies over the past generation—imagined themselves (and were perceived by others) through the prism of the Famine as connected to Ireland and its diaspora.[89]

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[89] John Belchem, Sam Davies, Frank Neal, Colin G. Pooley, and P.J. Waller have produced a significant body of work examining the history of the Irish in Liverpool. While the Montreal Irish have been the object of comparatively less scholarly scrutiny, several important studies have been produced, including Rosalyn Trigger, "The Geopolitics of the Irish-Catholic Parish in Nineteenth-century Montreal," *Journal of Historical Geography* 27, no. 4 (2001): 553-572; Rosalyn Trigger, "Protestant Restructuring in the Canadian City: Church and Mission in the Industrial Working-

Memory

The late twentieth century upsurge of popular and governmental interest in Famine commemoration was accompanied by the rise of memory as a major field of interdisciplinary academic enquiry, with historians taking a leading role in analyzing how memory of the past has been created, transmitted, and circulated in public spheres. The wide range of studies produced over the past twenty-five years have made commonplace the notions that memory—whether described as social, cultural, public or collective—is constructed, is both shaped by and reflective of the social and spatial context in which it is formulated, and is central to the maintenance of group identities. Beyond these generally shared viewpoints, however, the scholarly literature about memory has introduced a variety of perspectives on how and why particular aspects of the past are commemorated and reconstituted in the present.

One significant approach to studying the historical phenomenon of collective remembrance has been to analyze public memory that is invented to reinforce dominant power structures. Eric Hobsbawm adopted this approach in his study of nation building in

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Class District of Griffintown, Montreal," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* 31, no. 1 (fall 2002): 5-18; Rosalyn Trigger, "Irish Politics on Parade: The Clergy, National Societies, and St. Patrick's Day Processions in Nineteenth-Century Montreal and Toronto," *Histoire sociale-Social History* 37, no. 74 (November 2004): 159-199; Sherry Olson and Patricia Thornton, "The Challenge of the Irish Catholic Community in Nineteenth-Century Montreal," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 35, no. 70 (2002): 331-362; Kevin James, "Dynamics of Ethnic Associational Culture in a Nineteenth-Century City: Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal, 1834-56," *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 26, no. 1 (2001): 47-66; David A. Wilson, "The Fenians in Montreal, 1862-68: Invasion, Intrigue, and Assassination," *Éire-Ireland: Journal of Irish Studies* 38, nos. 3, 4 (Fall-Winter, 2003): 109-133; Simon Jolivet, "Les Deux Questions Irlandaises du Québec, 1898-1921: des Considérations Canadiennes-Françaises et Irlando-Catholiques" (PhD diss., Concordia University, 2008); John Matthew Barlow, "The House of the Irish: Irishness, History, and Memory in Griffintown, Montreal, 1868-2009" (PhD diss., Concordia University, 2009).

Europe between 1870 and 1914. Exploring various commemorative forms and rituals invented by social political elites, Hobsbawm untangles the ways in which memory was moulded and manipulated for political ends. He points out that the upheaval brought on by rapid industrialization and urbanization in an era of capitalist modernity created a profound sense of dislocation and discontinuity between past and present. In this context, European states relied on "invented traditions" to nurture national feeling. The public was thus exposed to ideologically inspired and socially engineered forms of institutional memory that altered their relation to the past.[90]

While Hobsbawm acknowledges the importance of a receptive public to the invention of national traditions, he overstates the extent to which nation-states have been systematically hegemonic in their marshalling of the past, particularly given the persistence of traditional group identities and associations.[91] Official forms of remembrance have often projected images of nationhood that could resonate even among ethnically heterogeneous and economically stratified populations. Moreover, the "imagined community" of the nation, as described by Benedict Anderson, relies on historical narratives that merge "a wide variety of political and ideological constellations."[92] Whether the public memories of national communities are a blend of variant versions of the past or the result of competition between official and vernacular

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[90] Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 12-13.
[91] See Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).
[92] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 4.

cultures, as John Bodnar contends,[93] national narratives of remembrance are often designed to yoke together disparate national elements.

The main function of national memory in the modern age, according to Pierre Nora, has been to assume the place of "real environments of memory [that] have disappeared." By organizing exhibitions, festivals, anniversaries, and commemorations at lieux de mémoire—"the ultimate embodiments of a memorial consciousness…in an historical age that calls out for memory because it has abandoned it"—the nation-state serves as a conduit for modern historical memory. Although Nora deems this form of memorializing an anemic alternative to the organic memory of pre-modern societies, he insists that the expression of a constructed or invented national memory is preferable to the emergence of commemorations with local and particularistic emphases that threaten to sunder consensual, national understandings of the past.[94]

Yet for some scholars who agree with Nora's premise that memory and history have little in common, there is a lingering perception that public memory, whether constructed for national or local audiences, threatens to elide the complexities that history works so hard to elaborate, particularly when heritage industries or particularist interest groups assume control of how the past is packaged.[95] The most common criticism is that public representations of the past tend to "privilege the interests of the contemporary"

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[93] John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 14-15.
[94] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989), 12.
[95] See Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-century Nova Scotia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994); and David Lowenthal, *Possessed by the Past: The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (New York: Free Press, 1996).

and in the process twist or completely miss what actually happened.[96] More recently, as historically marginalized groups have increasingly staked their claims in public spheres, demanding recognition and representations of their collective memories of catastrophe,[97] they too have come under fire for refashioning the past in a style designed to satisfy contemporary tastes. Some scholars have taken particular aim at commemorative narratives that either conflate the individual experience of suffering with a collective trauma that is imagined retrospectively,[98] or acts of remembrance that too neatly slough off the burdens of the past and celebrate the emergence of social groups into capitalist modernity.[99]

Notwithstanding such criticisms of how the past is represented outside of academia, there is a growing consensus among memory scholars that history and memory, despite their differences, are linked in fundamental ways, and that public memory is an ongoing and ever-shifting popular system of representation rather than a fixed construction reserved for officially sanctioned landmarks and lieux de mémoire.[100] The work of Raphael Samuel has been particularly influential in conceiving of group memory as a variable, dynamic process through which identities are constituted. In

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[96] Wulf Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory," *History and Theory* 41, no. 2 (May 2002), 180.
[97] See Peter Gray and Kendrick Oliver, eds., *The Memory of Catastrophe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004.
[98] See R.F. Foster, *The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making it up in Ireland.* London: Allen Lane, 2001.
[99] David Lloyd, "Colonial Trauma/Postcolonial Recovery?" *Interventions* 2 (2000): 212–28.
[100] Jan Assman, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique* 65 (Spring/Summer 1995), 125-133; Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, "Social Memory Studies: From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (August 1998), 105-140; and Guy Beiner, *Remembering the Year of the French: Irish Folk History and Social Memory* (Madison: the University of Wisconsin Press, 2007).

Theatres of Memory, Samuel explores the diverse and often contradictory ways in which the past has been transmitted in everyday life—through architecture, museums, fashion, film and theatre, politics, food, and tourism.[101] His study offers compelling reasons for historians to move beyond the obvious assaults on commemoration and other forms of collective remembrance and engage in close analyses of the cultural history of popular memory, a field that Jan Assman describes as mnemohistory—one that studies "the past as it is remembered."[102]

In Ireland, for much of the twentieth century, the past as it was remembered bore little resemblance to the past as it was interpreted by professional historians. However, by the early 1990s, as preparations were underway to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Famine, there was a surge of scholarly interest in examining how Irish groups have recollected and represented the past in the public sphere. In addition to the wide range of historical studies that were produced at this time analyzing the various economic, administrative, demographic, and migratory aspects of the Famine,[103] a number of historians, motivated to reassess nationalist and revisionist orthodoxies and eager to demonstrate a heightened self-reflexivity about the relationship between Irish historical

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[101] Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory, Vol.I: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 1994).

[102] Jan Assman, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 21.

[103] The scholarly output on the Famine since the early 1990s has been prodigious. See Cormac Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A New Economic History, 1780-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Austin Bourke, *The Visitation of God*; Christine Kinealy, *This Great Calamity; The Irish Famine 1845-52* (Roberts Rinehart, Boulder, 1995); Peter Gray, *Famine, Land, and Politics: British Government and Irish Society, 1843-1850* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1999); Donal Kerr, *'A Nation of Beggars'?*; Christopher Morash and Richard Hayes, eds., *'Fearful Realities': New Perspectives on the Famine* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1996); Scally, *The End of Hidden Ireland*; and Cathal Póirtéir, *Famine Echoes* (Dublin: Gill & MacMillan, 1995).

scholarship and collective memory, began exploring how and why Irish group memory of the Famine has been constructed and communicated outside of academia.[104]

Yet historians of the Irish were divided in their responses to the contemporary boom in Famine commemoration. Several prominent historians, most notably Kevin Whelan and Christine Kinealy, who expressed frustration with their profession's traditional reluctance to contribute to popular historical understanding of the catastrophe, opted to collaborate with Irish governmental heritage agencies by constructing late twentieth century commemorative narratives. These scholars sought to return "the memory and the ownership of the Famine" from professional academics to the Irish public by helping to create narratives of communal healing.[105] Echoing one of the commemorative messages delivered by then Irish President Mary Robinson, Whelan believed that historians, government, and the Irish at home and abroad could use the sesquicentennial of the Famine to reconnect with a past that had become far too foreign: "The frail Famine voices now reach us across an aching void. We need to amplify that acoustic; in hearing them attentively, we might reclaim our Famine ghosts from their

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[104] Ian McBride, "Introduction: Memory and National Identity in Modern Ireland," in *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, ed. Ian McBride (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2. Over the past fifteen years, a number of Irish historians have adopted an approach that has loosely been described as post-revisionist. According to Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity, 1760-1830* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), x, post-revisionism is "a dialogic understanding of the relationship between past and present, a refusal of stereotyping and essentialism, a non-talmudic irreverence to textual authority, and a self-conscious heave beyond the comforting polarities of 'nationalist' and 'revisionist' history."

[105] Ibid.

enforced silence and invisibility.[106] Diagnosing the Irish as long suffering from the traumatic aftershock of famine and forced emigration, Whelan prescribed commemoration to "alleviate a cultural loneliness we do not even know we have and liberate us into a fuller and more honest sense of ourselves, showing us how we got to be where we are, even as we leave it behind."[107] Similarly, Christine Kinealy believed that Famine remembrance had "the potential to illuminate a process of self-discovery," whereby Irish people could "confront the ghosts of their tragic past."[108]

However, a number of prominent Irish scholars disagree with the approach adopted by Whelan and Kinealy, pointing to the recent round of Famine commemoration as proof that public acts of remembrance have more to do with administering historical myths to heal the wounds of contemporary psyches than achieving a deeper understanding of the catastrophe. Roy Foster was unable to repress his feelings of displeasure with the way in which "the language of popular psychotherapy replaced that of historical analysis" during the Famine commemoration.[109] The effect of marking the 150th anniversary of the Famine, according to Foster, "was to highlight the issues of guilt and pain, driven by the idea that some sort of empathy could be achieved, and a therapeutic catharsis brought about.[110] Similarly forthright about her preference for a more measured approach to understanding the Famine, Edna Longley argued that the

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[106] Kevin Whelan quoted in Cormac Ó Gráda, "Famine, Trauma, and Memory," Béaloideas*: Journal of the Folklore of Ireland* 69 (2001): 134.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Christine Kinealy, *The Great Irish Famine: Impact, Ideology, and Rebellion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 28.
[109] Foster, *The Irish Story*, 31.
[110] Ibid.

"psycho-babble" of the recent commemorative message was so laced with emotion and sentimentality that there was little opportunity for any serious consideration of the real causes and consequences of the disaster.[111] Likewise, Cormac Ó Gráda has been troubled by the commemorative emphasis on the collective experience of trauma. Unlike Foster and Longley, however, who dismiss rather cavalierly the notion that Irish cultural dysfunction stems from Famine amnesia, Ó Gráda poses some important questions: "What is the life span of a collective trauma? How does one measure its intensity?"[112] Ultimately, he finds the historian ill-equipped to gauge how emotionally affected the Irish might still be 150 years after the Famine. But what he finds most difficult to accept in Whelan and Kinealy's assessment of Ireland's psychological condition is "the transfer from the individual to some national or communal psyche," especially given that the Famine was an uneven experience, affecting various regions and classes in Ireland differently.[113]

While questioning the longevity of Famine trauma, these Irish scholars have also objected to the tendency of collective acts of remembrance to incorporate commercial and political interests. In the case of the 150th anniversary of the Famine, Roy Foster points out that the commemoration commodified a tragic past by "exploiting tourist sites and attracting interest from the Irish diaspora."[114] For Longley, the Famine commemoration was a site where the crass demands of tourism and imported identity

[111] Edna Longley, "Northern Ireland: Commemoration, Elegy, Forgetting," in *History and Memory in Modern Ireland,* 232.
[112] Ó Gráda, "Famine, Trauma, and Memory," 12.
[113] Ibid., 13.
[114] R.F. Foster, *The Irish Story,* 31.

politics (particularly from the Irish diaspora in the United States), "combine[d] with soft-focus indigenous nationalism," forming "a self-congratulatory swamp of collective memory."[115] Particularly disturbed by the political and commercial influence that Irish America had on shaping the recent "popular reinvention of the Famine," Longley maintains that the anniversary was sacrificed to "the interests of nationalist ideologues and tourist promoters…interested in re-living (and in selling) a Catholic Irish trauma."[116]

Protestations against the trivialization and politicization of the Famine through its commemoration came also from historians of the Irish diaspora. Though somewhat less disparaging of the sesquicentenary events than were his colleagues, David Fitzpatrick, an authority on Irish emigration and the Irish in Britain, found affirmation in contemporary rituals of Famine remembrance that "Irish public life continues to dwell in imagined pasts as well as an equally fictionalized present, the link being most powerfully expressed through commemoration."[117] For Fitzpatrick, the self-consciously ecumenical political attempt by cultural and political elites of "reconciling hostile factions through identification of an episode of common inspiration or shared suffering in the past" came at the expense of historical reality.[118] In Canada, there was more scholarly skepticism directed towards the Famine history being peddled in the public sphere.[119] One leading

[115] Longley, "Northern Ireland," 232.
[116] Ibid., 231.
[117] David Fitzpatrick, "Commemoration in the Irish Free State: a Chronicle of Embarrassment," in *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, 186.
[118] Ibid.
[119] See Cecil Houston, "A Personal Brief on the Subject of the Grosse-Île Heritage Site, in "Briefs Presented in Toronto, 15 April 1993;" Bruce Elliot, "The Place of Grosse-Île in the Story of Immigration," in "Briefs Presented in Toronto, 15 April 1993;" and Jean Burnet, *The Irish Famine: Ethnic Groups as Victims* (Toronto: Robert F. Harney Professorship and Program in

scholar of Irish immigration to Canada, Cecil Houston, disavowed the commemoration as "a whole industry built around the unfortunate circumstances of the deaths of a large number of people," based on the myth that the Famine exodus is the story of Irish entry to Canada.[120] Underlying these pointed criticisms of the sesquicentennial commemorations, is a longstanding scholarly distrust of public memory of the Famine past and present, and an inclination to question its historical validity and ridicule what is deemed its nationalist orthodoxies and mawkish, self-congratulatory tendencies.

However, an increasing number of scholars, most notably James Donnelly Jr., Margaret Kelleher, and Peter Gray, consider collective memory of the catastrophe worthy of closer investigation.[121] Rather than focusing on correcting the myths and misrepresentations propagated through Irish collective remembrances of the Famine, these scholars have devoted attention to reading popular historical discourses that do not necessarily conform to the version of the past articulated in academic histories. Recognizing that all historical representations, whether academic or popular, are shaped by the contemporary context in which they are conceived, these scholars have sought to interrogate commemorative monuments and narratives that have been constructed in

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Ethnic Immigration and Pluralism Studies, University of Toronto, 1997). Mark McGowan, who has written about the creation of Irish Famine memory in Canada and served as historical advisor to Toronto's recently inaugurated Irish Famine Memorial, is one of the few professional historians who has deemed Famine commemoration worthy of analysis and engagement.
[120] *Ideas*, CBC, 9 October 1996.
[121] See James S. Donnelly, "The Construction of the Memory of the Famine in Ireland and the Irish Diaspora, 1850-1900," *Éire-Ireland: a Journal of Irish Studies* 31, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 26-61; Peter Gray, "Memory and the Commemoration of the Great Irish Famine," in *The Memory of Catastrophe*, eds. Peter Gray and Kendrick Oliver (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 46-64; Margaret Kelleher, "Hunger and History: Monuments to the Great Irish Famine," *Textual Practice* (2002): 249-276.

domestic and diasporic public spheres. Rejecting the notion that there has been a monolithic Irish public, at home and abroad, that shares a single, unified perception of the Famine, their analyses attempt to disentangle the complex ways that various Irish social groups have used Famine memory to construct identities.

Adopting this approach to Famine remembrance is a rewarding focus for the study of Irish migration and diasporic identity. As John Belchem has noted, "imagined communities, for those who leave home, become doubly important because the initial referent, the shaping community, is left behind and a further community, the new homeland, begins to shape the mental landscape."[122] Furthermore, in the case of many Irish Catholics in the diaspora, the migration process, often remembered as traumatic, was invoked in narratives of remembrance as the formative historical experience central to their identity. In this sense, analyzing Famine remembrance allows one to explore the notion that commemoration of the catastrophe served a larger purpose than merely providing an outlet for expressing residual resentment towards the British government. At various points over the twentieth century, groups of Irish Catholics within the diaspora called upon this memory as a means of forging links with the Irish homeland and with other Irish groups in the diaspora, while reinforcing ethnic solidarity in their local communities.

Irish migration and memory, however, are areas of scholarly investigation that remain largely isolated from each other. While this approach to examining the place of

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[122] John Belchem, "The Irish Diaspora: the Complexities of Mass Migration," *Przeglad Polonijny* (*Review of Polish Diaspora*) 31, no. 1 (2005): 87-98.

the catastrophic past in immigrant communities has been adopted in several studies of Irish America, where the Famine is a politically potent memory,[123] only a handful of historians have begun to explore issues related to collective memory and identity within Irish diasporic communities in Britain and Canada. Recently, however, there are indications that historians are becoming more willing to explore representations of the imagined community of the Irish in Britain where they have traditionally been more cut off from their history by what Mary Hickman describes as "a series of absences from spaces of cultural reproduction, in education, memorials and popular culture."[124] Along with John Belchem, Donald MacRaild is among the few historians to emphasize the importance of the Famine as a particularly powerful touchstone in the construction of identities for Irish groups in Britain.[125] In the Canadian context, though Grosse-Île has been the object of considerable scholarly attention,[126] Mark McGowan's recent overview

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[123] See Donnelly, "The Construction of the Memory;" Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish: a History* (Toronto: Longman, 2000); and Kevin O'Neill, "The Star Spangled Shamrock: Memory and Meaning in Irish America," in *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, ed. McBride, 118-138.

[124] Bronwen Walter, Sarah Morgan, Mary J. Hickman, Joseph M. Bradley, "Family Stories, Public Silence: Irish Identity Construction amongst the Second-generation Irish in England," *Scottish Geographical Journal* 118, no. 3 (2002): 201.

[125] See Donald M. MacRaild, "Crossing Migrant Frontiers."

[126] See Marianna O'Gallagher, *Grosse Île: Gateway to Canada 1832-1937* (Ste-Foy, QC: Carraig Books, 1984); Marianna O'Gallagher and Rose Masson Dompierre, *Eyewitness Grosse Isle 1847* (Ste-Foy, QC: Carraig Books, 1995); Michael Quigley, "Grosse-Île: Canada's Famine Memorial," *Éire-Ireland* 32, no. 1 (1997): 20-40; Pádraic Ó Laighin, "Grosse-Île : The Holocaust Revisited," in *The Untold Story: the Irish in Canada, vol. 1*, eds. Robert O'Driscoll and Lorna Reynolds (Toronto: Celtic Arts of Canada, 1988), 75-101; Rhona Richman-Kenneally, "Now You Don't See It, Now You Do: Situating the Irish in the Material Culture of Grosse Île," *Éire-Ireland* 38, no. 3-4 (2003): 33-55; Kathleen O'Brien, "Famine Commemorations: Visual Dialogues, Visual Silences," in *Ireland's Great Hunger: Silence, Memory and Commemoration*, eds. David A. Valone and Christine Kinealy (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2002), 271-93; Kathleen O'Brien, "Language, Monuments, and the Politics of Memory in Quebec and Ireland," *Éire-Ireland* 38, no. 1-2 (2003): 141-160; Sylvie Gauthier, "Le Memorial: An Irish Memorial at

of Famine memory in Canada stands out as one of the few studies to consider the long-term cultural consequences of the Irish influx during the Famine.[127] While drawing on the still slight body of literature, this comparative study of Famine remembrance addresses the lacuna in the historiography of migration and memory by examining the interplay of cultural and structural factors in the lives of Irish immigrants and their descendents in Montreal and Liverpool as they returned to the Famine as a memory through which Irish ethnic identity could be renewed.

Comparison

The scholarly literature on comparison has probed behind Marc Bloch's view that all history is comparative history to explore the strengths and limitations of historical work that juxtaposes two or more historical subjects or processes. The most obvious advantage of adopting a comparative perspective, particularly across cultures, is that it invites us to look beyond an isolated case and to question, as George Frederickson has put it, "the tacit assumptions that tend to result from perpetual immersion in the study of a single culture."[128] As scholars have increasingly explored social phenomena that transgress territorial borders, transcultural study has been promoted as a particularly useful way of

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Grosse Ile in Quebec," in *Ireland's Great Hunger: Silence, Memory and Commemoration*, 294-310; André Charbonneau and André Sévigny, *Grosse-Île: A Record of Daily Events*; André Charbonneau and Doris Drolet-Dubé, *A Register of Deceased Persons at Sea and on Grosse Ile in 1847* (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1997).

[127] McGowan, *Creating Canadian Historical Memory.*

[128] George M. Frederickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), xiv-xxv.

exploring the past beyond national parameters.[129] But most fundamentally, the strength of historical comparison, at its best, is that it can illuminate the origins of historical phenomena and more sharply define what makes them distinctive or similar in various settings. However, no comparison can be fully controlled for variables. Thus for the comparative approach to be effective, historians need to be explicit about their selection of cases, the method used, and the purposes pursued, while, as far as it is possible, laying bare the assumptions implied by the comparative project. A tall order indeed, but, as Chris Lorenz argues, the selection of subject and method is itself a political choice. Without a clear explication of the comparative framework, "the politics of comparison" remains "hidden in the choice of parameters."[130]

An extensive range of typologies have been introduced to encourage awareness of how comparisons are constructed and to promote the formulation of more rigorous methodological approaches to comparative history. My study borrows from two comparative frameworks in particular: Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers' conception of comparative history as "the contrast of contexts" and Nancy Green's "divergent approach" to interpreting immigrant groups in different national settings.[131] Both of these comparative frameworks conform to what Gérard Bouchard describes as the integral

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[129] See Frederick Cooper, "Race, Ideology, and the Perils of Comparative History," *American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (October 1996):1122-1138.

[130] Chris Lorenz, "Comparative Historiography: Problems and Perspectives," *History/Theory* 38, no. 1 (February 1999): 39.

[131] Nancy L. Green, "The Comparative Method and Poststructural Structuralism: New Perspectives for Migration Studies," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 13, no. 4 (Summer, 1994): 3-22; Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers, "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, no. 2 (April 1980): 174-197.

comparative model, which involves the comparison of two or more objects of study sufficiently similar to warrant their juxtaposition as equal units.[132] Though Green's divergent comparative approach is not specifically intended for the comparison of a common collective memory in different diasporic settings, it provides a useful framework for examining the interplay of cultural and socio-economic factors with regard to the experience of migration and the subsequent process of adaptation of a single ethnic group in different host societies.[133] The conclusions generated from this kind of comparative study of immigrant groups depend on the angle of inquiry, the concepts employed, and the analytic questions posed rather than on any a priori theory. The "contrast of contexts" model of comparative history proposed by Skocpol and Somers is similar in this regard. Rather than proceeding from a generalized theory that is applied to various cases, this approach takes a broad theme or an historical phenomenon (such as Famine memory) and examines its manifestation in distinct settings. The emphasis in this type of comparison is in preserving the historical particularity of each case and drawing out contrasts and convergences. The limitation of this approach is that it does not promise sweeping macro-level explanations, particularly if the study is limited to just two case studies. However, it does allow for deep contextual analysis of the particular cases, while creating the

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[132] Gérard Bouchard, *The Making of the Nations and Cultures of the New World: An Essay in Comparative History*, trans. Michelle Weinroth and Paul Leduc Browne (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 30-31. The other major comparative model delineated by Bouchard is what he calls the referential model. This involves the comparison of two or more different units in as many societies, but only one of these units is the focus for comparison. The other units of comparison serve to illuminate the main reference point. Victoria E. Bonnell, "The Uses of Theory, Concepts and Comparison in Historical Sociology," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22 (1980): 164, has another name for the type of comparison that is "between or among equivalent units:" analytical.

[133] Green, "The Comparative Method," 67-70.

opportunity of formulating general statements about how an historical process operates across time and place.

Employing a comparative method of enquiry, this dissertation examines how and why groups of Irish Catholics in two diasporic urban centres invoked memory of Famine migration in an effort to assert and maintain a sense of Irishness from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century. Exploring several key analytical questions—how was Famine memory negotiated and contested in each city? In what ways were sites, speeches, and events used to stimulate Famine memory and construct identities? How did nationalist and Catholic interests interact with Famine remembrance? To what extent were local understandings of the catastrophe shaped by wider national and diasporic influences? How did Famine remembrance change in these two settings over time?—will focus my analysis on the multiplicity of meanings transmitted through acts of Famine remembrance, and the extent to which they were calibrated to fit the changing contexts in which they were constructed.

This study concentrates on the local set of social relations within which Famine remembrance was organized, with references to the wider national and diasporic contexts. Restricting my comparative analysis to two case studies of Famine memory allows for in-depth analysis and comparison of the specific historical contexts and the way in which Irish diasporic groups in two societies differed in their remembrance of a shared historical experience; however, the limited scope of my comparative material obviously makes it difficult to draw causal inferences that are universally applicable. Thus the aim of this comparative analysis is to identify general patterns while at the same

time recognizing uniqueness and a sense of historical particularity. By examining how a common cultural phenomenon manifested in unique historical contexts, I allow for divergent explanations for the relevance of the Famine migration for diasporic groupings of Irish, while also exploring common ways in which Irish identities over time were preserved, modified, and reinvented through Famine remembrance.

Sources

This study focuses on evidence in Liverpool and Montreal of the discursive and monumental reconstruction of the Famine, primarily through the various forms of commemoration that were organized to observe the jubilee, centenary and sesquicentenary of the catastrophe. In addition to analyzing the ceremonies, speeches, and sermons performed to sanctify sites of Famine memory in these cities, I also pay close attention to the process of organizing and negotiating commemorative discourses. This involves careful analysis of what was reported in the ethnic and mainstream newspapers and what was recorded by Irish associations and institutions, including affiliates of the Land League, Home Rule associations, the Irish National Foresters, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, and a range of local Irish interests in Montreal and Liverpool. These groups, often led by the descendents of Irish immigrants, took up the responsibility of recalling the Famine, and particularly its migration—an historical moment deemed crucial to maintaining and representing the imagined community. Nationalist organizations often cooperated (and sometimes competed) with Irish Catholic religious authorities in nurturing connections to a shared historical identity. Thus, parish records of Catholic churches in Liverpool and Montreal, which often served as a focal

point for communal solidarity, will also be examined in an effort to understand the role that church leaders played in communicating a sense of Irish heritage to their parishioners through historical commemoration of the mid-nineteenth century catastrophe.[134]

While Famine commemorations will be the main area of investigation in this dissertation, it is important to look beyond formal and explicit manifestations of Famine memory, especially as some formerly strident nationalist organizations in Liverpool and Montreal made their politics less explicit over the course of the twentieth century, increasingly focusing on raising awareness of Irish history and culture among the descendents of migrants. As the central historical event in Irish constructions of collective identities in Montreal and Liverpool, the Famine was recalled through various forms of popular culture. Thus, this study explores how understandings of the catastrophe worked their way into popular histories, memoirs, parades, and pageantry. Furthermore, I analyze how Famine motifs and memories were present in commemorations honouring local religious and political Irish figures and marking other Irish historical anniversaries in the Irish diasporic nationalist commemorative calendar. To understand how late twentieth century narratives of Famine remembrance were constructed, received, and rejected, I interviewed the initiators of memory in both cities, investigated the activities and records of cultural associations and government agencies, and scrutinized media reports and academic commentaries. Finally, while accounting for what was remembered, I also interrogate silences. Examining why the Famine garnered so much attention at

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[134] Raphael Samuel, "An Irish Religion" in *Patriotism: the Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, ed. Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge, 1989), 104.

certain points in the twentieth century, while fading to the recesses of collective memory at others brings the political, social, and economic dynamics of Irish communities in Montreal and Liverpool into sharper focus.

Chapter Breakdown

By presenting my study in separate city-specific chapters I do not force a systematic comparison of the similarities and differences of Famine remembrance in two Irish diasporic urban centres. Each of the chapters that comprise the body of this dissertation cuts a wide swath through a fifty year period in either Liverpool or Montreal in an effort to understand the ways in which Famine memory found expression and modulated over time in the respective contexts.

The following chapter examines the popular historical discourses about the Famine produced in Liverpool in the first half of the twentieth century, a period when Irish Catholics in the city were still often perceived as posing a threat to the Anglo-Protestant host community. I examine a variety of sources that contain a rich commemorative narrative of the Famine, including newspapers, popular histories, memoirs, Famine parish commemorations, a monument to the martyr priests of 1847 erected to mark the jubilee of their sacrifice, and a range of political speeches and pamphlets produced amidst the struggle for Irish Home Rule, as well as those delivered during the interwar period in the context of the city's anti-Irish immigration movement in an effort to explain how and why Famine memory was invoked in Liverpool.

Chapter two remains in the same temporal frame, but makes the spatial leap across the Atlantic to examine expressions of Famine memory in Montreal. Unlike the Liverpool Irish, from very early on the Montreal Irish found a focal point for Famine commemorations: the Ship Fever Monument, a boulder installed in 1859 on the site of the reputed burial grounds adjacent to the fever sheds in Pointe Saint-Charles. However, transforming this lieu de mémoire into a Famine memorial site was a process that was protracted and often contentious. Inaugurated by representatives of the Anglo-Protestant elite and a small group of English and Irish workers involved in the construction of the Victoria Bridge, the monument's original intent was to preserve from desecration the final resting place of all immigrants who died during the typhus epidemic of 1847. Only over time and with great difficulty and debate did it come to be recognized as the city's memorial to Irish Catholic Famine migrants. Analyzing the contestations and commemorations that went on around the Ship Fever Monument in the first half of the twentieth century, this chapter examines the process by which it gradually came to be regarded as Montreal's Famine monument and one of the principal sites in the city through which Irish Catholics in the city collectively asserted an ethnic identity.

Returning to the British context, while moving forward chronologically, my next chapter shifts the focus to an analysis of popular historical discourses about the Famine in Liverpool in the second half of the twentieth century, as Irish Catholics in the city transformed from a suspect to a celebrated community against the backdrop of conflict and then tentative peace in Northern Ireland. This chapter's primary focus is the sesquicentennial events organized during the 1990s. In addition to the construction of a

memorial in St. Luke's Gardens, which served as the commemorative centrepiece, and a series of plaques that were placed at Famine sites around the city, there were a variety of religious, artistic, and educational initiatives designed to recall the Famine experience in Liverpool. Analyzing these commemorative activities reveals an array of international, national, and local cultural and political forces that were exerted in the process of negotiating and constructing collective memory of the Famine in late twentieth century Liverpool.

My fourth and final main chapter revisits Montreal to follow the story of how Irish groups in the city continued to lay claim to the Ship Fever Monument, as political and cultural elites made repeated attempts over the course of the second half of the twentieth century to expropriate the land on which the monument stood. During the planning stages of Expo '67 and at various points throughout the 1970s and 1980s, municipal authorities attempted to have the monument moved with the aim of developing and rezoning the area around the approach to the Victoria Bridge. Each attempt to move the monument stirred controversy and restored public interest in the site and the historical experiences of the Famine migrants. Irish groups in the city were roused to protest against various violations of the monument and call for its recognition as a national historic site. This attempt to have Montreal's most evocative Famine site recognized as nationally significant is examined in the context of Grosse-Île's rise to prominence in the 1990s as Canada's representative Famine site.

After exploring these case studies in Famine remembrance, my concluding chapter will bring Montreal and Liverpool into the same frame and discuss

commonalities and key differences. With its emphasis on the heterogeneity and complexity of Famine remembrance in these two diasporic centres, this study demonstrates that no two phenomena are exactly alike. Yet in this chapter I also outline recurrences common to the two case studies that may be representative of the larger historical patterns of Famine remembrance throughout the diaspora.

Chapter One

Remembrance and Recrimination

It's saying the thing all the time. Not just remembering.

—Roddy Doyle, *Oh, Play That Thing*

Narratives of remembrance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries enshrined the Famine migration to Liverpool as the central event in the city's Irish history. While no particular site in the city stood out as a focal point for its commemoration, the Famine was often recalled, albeit sometimes obliquely, through the political rhetoric of Irish nationalism and the religious rituals of the city's Catholic parishes. In nationalist speeches, memoirs, histories, and newspapers, as well as various Catholic commemorative acts marking the jubilee anniversaries of the city's "Famine parishes" and its "martyr priests," Irish groups in the city looked back to the Famine as their foundational moment and the cornerstone memory in the construction of local, national, and diasporic Irish identities.

In Liverpool, memory of the mid-nineteenth century migration was often mobilized in support of Ireland's Home Rule and the expansion of her spiritual empire. Like their counterparts in Montreal and other Irish diasporic centres throughout the Atlantic world, Irish nationalists in Liverpool looked back to the Famine as the most catastrophic example of British colonial misconduct in Ireland and thus the ultimate

rationale for the implementation of Irish self-government. This diasporic commitment to the homeland was often accompanied by the promise to preserve the Catholic faith of the Irish abroad, as their Famine forebears were venerated for doing generations earlier. Yet dwelling on the Famine was not just about strengthening the bonds of a transnational Irish Catholic community or fulfilling Ireland's national destiny; it was also a memory that was made to have relevance on a local level. Irish political and religious leaders in Liverpool reminded their constituents regularly that they—as a people who had persevered despite exposure to the most obstinate poverty and enduring prejudice—were the inheritors of the legacy of 1847. Famine remembrance thus offered Irish Catholics in the city, particularly those affiliated with the nationalist politics and Famine parishes of the northern docklands, opportunities to identify with an Irish Catholic community in Liverpool that had remained true to creed and country since the Famine.

By the interwar period, however, such recollections of the Famine had become a thing of the past. With the establishment of the Irish Free State and the gradual demise of nationalist politics in the city, the Liverpool Irish were less inclined to use Famine memory to cast themselves as persecuted exiles engaged in the historic struggle to preserve their faith and patriotism. But just as the Famine was losing relevance as a historical memory for Liverpool's Irish Catholics, the city's Protestant elite, alarmed by the prospect of another inflow of impoverished immigrants from Ireland, began to assert its own antagonistic appraisals of the Famine.

This chapter examines how Famine memory rose to prominence in the religious and political rhetoric of the Liverpool Irish around the time of the Famine jubilee and

then receded in the two decades following the First World War, only to be reintroduced in the form of anti-Irish rhetoric by academic, political, and religious representatives of the local Protestant establishment intent on restricting Irish immigration into Liverpool Whether recalled by sections of the host society as a means of asserting Protestant authority over the city's Irish minority, or by the Liverpool Irish themselves to construct political and cultural identities, the Famine was a potent and provocative memory in a city divided by sectarianism The Famine migration thus operated as a recurring motif and a powerful symbol in constructions of Liverpool Irish identity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—first by groups of Irish Catholics in the city and subsequently by sections of the Protestant host society set on "curing" the city's perennial Irish problem [1]

Famine Migration to Liverpool "the awful visitation"[2]

Liverpool's development as a major commercial and migration seaport in the century preceding the Famine ensured its place as the second city of the empire Its mercantile elite profited from Liverpool's leading role in the slave and triangular trade of the eighteenth century It continued to reap the rewards after trafficking in slaves was outlawed in 1807, as trade continued in cotton, sugar, and tobacco produced by slave labour in the Americas and the Caribbean Beyond slave-related trade, Liverpool prospered as a general cargo port and a central component of the nineteenth century

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[1] *The Times*, 7 September 1933

[2] John Denvir, *The Irish in Britain from the Earliest Times to the Fall and Death of Parnell* (London Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co , Ltd , 1892), 122

transnational commercial system. The city took advantage of its favourable location on the northwest coast by operating as a gateway for Atlantic trade, bringing in raw materials, such as grain, and timber from North America, while shipping out manufactured goods produced in England's factories.[3] In addition to this lucrative transoceanic economy, Liverpool dominated the trade across the Irish Sea, particularly in the decades before the Famine, when an increasing amount of Irish agricultural exports arrived in the city's quays and warehouses for distribution into the English market.[4] Liverpool augmented the wealth it generated from its maritime cargo trade as Europe's main emigration port. Migrants from across the British Isles and Europe were processed at the port, but no group had as great an impact on the city as the Irish, who, in search of seasonal work in England or a fresh start in North America, had long followed the well-worn trade route across the Irish Sea to the mouth of the Mersey.[5] After a day's voyage aboard one of the steam-driven ferries that regularly plied the rough waters of the Irish Sea they could have access to Liverpool's large (though often unforgiving) labour market and a range of affordable sailing packet lines to destinations in the New World.[6]

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[3] Graeme J. Milne, "Maritime Liverpool," in *Liverpool 800: Culture, Character and History*, ed. John Belchem (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), 257-310.

[4] Robert James Scally, *The End of Hidden Ireland: Rebellion, Famine, & Emigration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 188.

[5] With the introduction in the 1820s of steam navigation across the Irish Sea, Irish ferries brought migrants to Liverpool in increasing numbers. As competition between steamship companies intensified, passenger fares decreased, making the voyage accessible to all but the most destitute. Passengers could pay as little as ten-pence in steerage and three-pence on deck, less than the average day's pay of a Liverpool dock labourer. See Roger Swift, *The Irish in Britain, 1815-1914: Perspectives and Sources* (London: The Historical Association, 1990), 12.

[6] Ships that arrived in Liverpool from North America with timber or cotton were often used to convey emigrants to the New World on their return voyages.

However, for some Irish migrants who arrived in the port in the decades before the Famine hoping to earn their passage to North America or as transient labourers seeking work on the waterfront, in the nearby brickfields, or on farms further afield, Liverpool was the last stop. While the less fortunate Irish newcomers were relegated to the workhouse or reduced to petty crime and begging, most managed to subsist as petty dealers, hawkers, costermongers, or casual labourers on the city's expansive dock system.[7] Employed heaving coal, discharging and loading vessels, and in an assortment of menial jobs in the waterfront industry, Irish migrants often took work deemed least desirable by Liverpool workers.[8] Although most were unskilled, there was a minority of Irish who had worked their way into the city's lower middle class as shopkeepers, publicans, artisans, merchants, and clerks.[9] However, on the eve of the Famine, most of the almost 50,000 Irish-born residents of Liverpool (seventeen percent of the city's population) were unskilled workers who lived in crowded, ramshackle houses in the south-central part of the city centre and the northern docklands, near the hiring stands from which casual work was apportioned daily.[10]

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[7] By 1846 the docklands stretched for eleven kilometres along the Mersey's eastern shore. Nancy Ritchie-Noakes, *Liverpool's Historic Waterfront: The World's First Mercantile Dock System* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1984), 9.

[8] John Belchem, *Popular Politics, Riot and Labour: Essays in Liverpool History 1790-1940* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992), 8.

[9] Colin G. Pooley, "Segregation or Integration? The Residential Experience of the Irish in mid-Victorian Britain," in *The Irish in Britain, 1815-1939*, eds. Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (London: Pinter, 1989), 80.

[10] Dockside labour paid on average 10 to 12 shillings weekly; however, this amount fluctuated based on the availability of casual employment. See Colin G. Pooley, "The Irish in Liverpool circa 1850-1940," in *Comparative Studies on Governments and Non-Dominant Ethnic Groups in Europe, 1850-1940, Volume VIII*, edited by Max Engman, Francis W. Carter, A.C. Hepburn and Colin G. Pooley (Dartmouth: New York University Press, 1992), 74.

The arrival of Irish migrants during the Famine enlarged the existing Irish community, ensuring Liverpool's status as Britain's most Irish city.[11] For those desperate to escape starvation and for other Irish migrants with the means to explore better prospects abroad, cross-channel passage to Liverpool was the most accessible route out of Ireland.[12] Between 1846 and 1853 an estimated 1.8 million Irish migrants landed at the Port of Liverpool. Though most out-migrated shortly thereafter to the United States and British North America, a significant number of Irish remained in Liverpool or moved on to manufacturing centres in northern England and the midlands.[13] Port officials estimated that almost half of the 600,000 Irish paupers that arrived in the city during this period did not set sail for the United States or British North America,[14] but it is difficult to ascertain precisely what proportion of those who remained in Britain settled in Liverpool.[15] However, according to the 1851 census, the city's Irish-born population had reached

[11] Though London still had a greater number of Irish-born residents in 1851 at 108,548 (4.6 percent of the city's population), and Glasgow and Manchester had significant Irish populations, Liverpool had the highest proportion of Irish-born at 22 percent. See Neal, "The Famine Irish in England and Wales," 60.

[12] Donald M. MacRaild, *Irish Migrants in Modern Britain, 1750-1922* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 59. The main ports of entry into Britain during the Famine migration were Liverpool, Glasgow, Cardiff, Swansea, Newport, Whitehaven, and London. In 1847, more Irish left for transatlantic destinations from Liverpool than from any of Ireland's main emigration ports (Dublin, Galway, Sligo, Limerick, Cork, and Waterford).

[13] Frank Neal, "The Famine Irish in England and Wales," in *The Meaning of the Famine*, ed. Patrick O'Sullivan (London: Leicester University Press, 1997), 67, has noted that many paupers who could not pay for the train "would start tramping from the dock area, heading due east, on their way to Manchester, Salford, the Lancashire mill towns, or the Midlands."

[14] Frank Neal, *Sectarian Violence: the Liverpool Experience, 1819-1914: an Aspect of Anglo-Irish history*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 33; Scally, *The End of Hidden Ireland*, 205; and MacRaild, *Irish Migrants in Modern Britain*, 59. Neal looked to the Head Constable's Report to work out the number of 1847 arrivals from Ireland. To calculate the 1848 figure he collated numbers from newspaper reports of Irish landings. The total for 1849-53 was calculated based on British Parliamentary records of Irish arrivals to Liverpool. See Neal, "The Famine Irish in England and Wales," 59.

[15] The total Irish-born in Britain increased in number from 417,000 in 1841 to 727,000 ten years later.

83,813, an increase of 34,174 since 1841. This suggests that a significant number of Famine refugees did stay put. When considering that Irish migrants continued to enter en masse until 1853, and that many of the more destitute newcomers were likely overlooked in the 1851 census, it is safe to assume that an even greater number of Famine migrants made Liverpool home.

Their arrival exacerbated Liverpool's already significant problems with poverty, housing, and public health. Even before the 1847 Irish influx, Liverpool, dubbed "the black spot on the Mersey," had gained its reputation as "the most unhealthy town in the whole kingdom."[16] By the end of 1846 there were already 13,000 Irish paupers in the city and outbreaks of diarrhea and dysentery were putting great stress on the city's system of public relief and raising fears of increases in parish rates.[17] With the arrival of an estimated 300,000 Irish migrants in 1847, the city not only had to contend with an enormous increase in its pauper population, it was faced with a devastating typhus epidemic.[18]

Typhus, or "Irish fever" as it was commonly known, spread rapidly among the migrants who sought shelter in the north end Irish wards of Vauxhall, Scotland, and Exchange, and the south central ward of Great George.[19] Many of the impoverished Irish newcomers had little choice but to crowd together in "ill-ventilated courts, damp and dirty cellars, and inferior lodging-houses," conditions that quickly made the disease,

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[16] *Liverpool Times*, 31 December 1846.
[17] *The Times*, 4 December 1844.
[18] *The Times* 4 May 1847.
[19] Frank Neal, *Black '47: Britain and the Famine Irish*, (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1988), 131.

which was transmitted through body lice, endemic.[20] In the packed Irish wards of the city, especially the north end Irish enclave off Scotland Road, or 'Little Ireland', which had become "the most densely populated area of Irish immigrants in mainland Britain," typhus took its toll with terrifying speed.[21] As the disease reached epidemic proportions by March 1847, so too did the resentment against the Irish in Liverpool, a city that was already divided along sectarian lines before the Famine crisis.

No longer "confined to the lower classes," Irish fever was "establishing itself among the English population, who had previously escaped its ravages,"[22] and Liverpool's host society increasingly directed its wrath at Irish migrants for contaminating their city. Preferring "to herd together…to avoid any opportunity of airy and cleanly lodging that may be afforded them," and "to lie in heaps of their own," the Irish, with "their…disgustingly filthy" habits were held responsible for their own suffering and now that of the whole resident population.[23] However, while many long-settled Liverpudlians looked with righteous indignation upon Irish famine and fever as

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[20] Medical Officer of Health Report, re: Irish immigration, 1851, 12, Medical Officer of Health Reports for Liverpool, 1847-1973, Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool, UK (hereafter cited as LVRO). It was not until 1908 that scientists understood that typhus was transmitted through bacterial microorganisms called Rickettsia Prowazekii found in the feces of body lice. Most often the rickettsiae made its way into the bloodstream of victims when in the process of scratching they crushed the louse and pushed it through their skin's surface. The rickettsiae could also survive in the remains of crushed louse. When dried out, the bacteria became airborne and could be ingested through breathing. The disease usually followed a two-week course, with victims experiencing aches, shivering, twitching, bloating in the face, rashes and discolouration of the skin, and cognitive confusion. See Neal, *Black '47*, 125-126.

[21] Frank Boyce, "From Victorian 'Little Ireland' to Heritage Trail: Catholicism, Community and Change in Liverpool's Docklands," in *The Irish in Victorian Britain: the Local Dimension,* eds. Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), 278.

[22] *The Times*, 4 May 1847. Medical Officer of Health Report, re: Irish Immigration, 1851, 8. By June 1947, typhus made its first appearance in the affluent areas of Toxteth-Park and West Derby.

[23] *The Times*, 21 June 1847; *The Times*, 4 May 1847.

"God's agencies" and "national punishment for sin,"[24] their fury was soon tinged with fear. In addition to the understandable concern that typhus posed a very real threat to their own lives, Liverpudlians were distressed that the incessant flow of Irish paupers was going to have a devastating effect on their city, leading to social unrest, deskilling of the workforce, unemployment, and an exhausted public relief system requiring ever-increasing poor-rate payments.[25]

With so many either physically incapable of work or unable to find employment, the newly arrived Irish overwhelmed an already strained system of poor relief, leaving city authorities scrambling to meet the crushing demand for public assistance. Outdoor relief stations, such as the one on Fenwick Street, which provided relief (125 grams of bread and one litre of soup) to women and children over 370,000 times in January 1847, helped ease some of the distress, but these were stopgap measures.[26] Private missions run by Quakers and Marist fathers were also active in offering the Irish-born and the indigenous poor some reprieve from their suffering.[27] However, as most of the financial burden for relief continued to fall on local ratepayers, there was growing public sentiment that Ireland should pay for its own dependents. With the passing of the Poor Relief (Ireland) Act, intended to make Irish ratepayers provide relief for their own, Liverpool Poor Law Guardians focused on ensuring that British parishes were not encumbered by

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[24] Reverend Hugh McNeile, M.A., Hon. Cannon of Chester, *The Famine, a Rod of God: Its Provoking Cause—Its Merciful Design: A Sermon Preached in St. Jude's Church, Liverpool on Sunday February 28, 1847* (London: Seeley, Burnside, and Seeley, 1847), 5.
[25] John Belchem, "Liverpool in 1848, Identity and Issues," *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, vol. 147* (Liverpool: Printed for the Society, 1998), 5–7.
[26] Ian McKeane, *The Great Irish Famine of 1845-52 and its Effects on Liverpool: A Fact Sheet*, 3, Ian McKeane's Papers, Liverpool, UK (hereafter cited as McKeane Papers).
[27] Scally, *The End of Hidden Ireland*, 203.

the expense and inconvenience of relieving Irish paupers. These attempts at reforming the poor relief system in Ireland were largely unsuccessful in easing the burden carried by Liverpool ratepayers during the Famine years and did nothing to address the immediate crisis of the typhus epidemic.

By the summer of 1847, city authorities began to take more direct action to stem the spread of disease. Efforts were made to clear the cellars of "the low and densely-populated part of the town, which emitted "pestiferous exhalations into the atmosphere" and "rapidly consign[ed] its victims to premature graves."[28] Fines were also levied against those responsible for letting these "abominable holes...only six feet in height from the floor to the ceiling," which rose to a level only "a foot and a-half above the street."[29] There were also concerted efforts to rid the city of Irish paupers as soon as possible by returning them to Ireland. Popular attitudes towards the Irish had hardened considerably since late 1846, when there was still some recognition that "the overseers of Liverpool [could] not send the poor creatures back without exposing them to imminent risk of starvation."[30] By July 1847, city authorities had no qualms returning Irish paupers "in thousands...upon their native shores."[31] Six months later, as many as 15,000 Irish migrants to the city had been returned to Ireland. However, like many of the steps taken by city authorities during the Famine, the repatriation scheme did little to alleviate the suffering of Irish Famine refugees or the city's resident population, as many of the Irish

[28] *Liverpool* Albion, 13 July 1847; 10 August 1847; 13 July 1847.
[29] Ibid.
[30] *The Times*, 31 December 1846.
[31] *Liverpool Albion*, 13 July 1847.

returnees found conditions at home so unbearable that they came straight back to Liverpool.[32]

As well as repatriating thousands of Irish paupers and clearing crowded cellars, city officials set up fever sheds and hospitals to quarantine those afflicted with typhus. As the number of people exhibiting signs of the disease increased, it was clear that the existing fever ward located next to Brownlow workhouse was insufficient, leading the Irish Relief Committee (associated with the Select Vestry) to construct three temporary fever sheds adjacent to the workhouse facilities, each accommodating one hundred patients. By April, the demand for quarantine space had risen sharply and several buildings on the corner of Great Howard Street and Chadwick Street were converted into fever sheds "capable of holding between 400 and 500 fever patients."[33] Still there was a shortage of quarantine space, so Liverpool authorities, in response to growing public pressure to hospitalize typhus victims away from residential areas, decided to use three government supplied vessels as floating quarantine stations that would be anchored near the docks.[34] *The Newcastle* was reserved for Irish migrants who arrived at the port exhibiting signs of typhus, while *the Akbar* and *the Druid* were vessels converted into fever hospitals for those who contracted the disease in Liverpool. [35] Though several thousand typhus victims were installed in the city's various quarantine facilities in the

[32] Neal, *Black '47*, 137-8.
[33] *The Times*, 5 April 1847.
[34] In 1847, several locations outside of the city centre, including an industrial school in Kirkdale and Hibre Island at the mouth of the Dee estuary, were proposed as sites for a large quarantine hospital. See Ian McKeane, *Learpholl agus an Gorta Mór—Liverpool and the Great Famine*, 13, McKeane Papers.
[35] Neal, *Black '47*, 153, 133-136.

summer of 1847, many of the approximately 60,000 city residents that Dr. Duncan, (Liverpool's Medical Officer of Health) estimated were ill with typhus had remained beyond the reach of public health officials.[36]

By autumn 1847, the city had closed most of these temporary quarantine facilities as the epidemic finally subsided,[37] but not before 7,475 people had died—5,239 from typhus and 2,236 from diarrhea and dysentery, at least 6,000 of whom were Irish.[38] Most were buried hastily in pauper burial grounds in St. Mary's churchyard in Cambridge Street and St. Martin in the Fields in Sylvester Street, as well as the cemetery next to St. Anthony's Church.[39] The mortality rate was highest among the impoverished Irish in the crowded courts and cellars of the Vauxhall area, particularly in Lace, Banastre, Addison, Oriel, Chisenhale, and Stockdale Streets, and in Crosbie and New Bird Streets of the south end. While the majority of fatalities from disease in 1847 were Irish, Liverpudlians of all backgrounds were counted among the typhus victims, including twelve Liverpool-born clerics, ten doctors, and as many as thirty nurses, policemen, and poor law officials who had been involved in providing relief to Irish Famine migrants.[40]

The devastation wrought by disease did not end in 1847. Two years later, Liverpool, more than any other city in England, felt the effects of a European cholera

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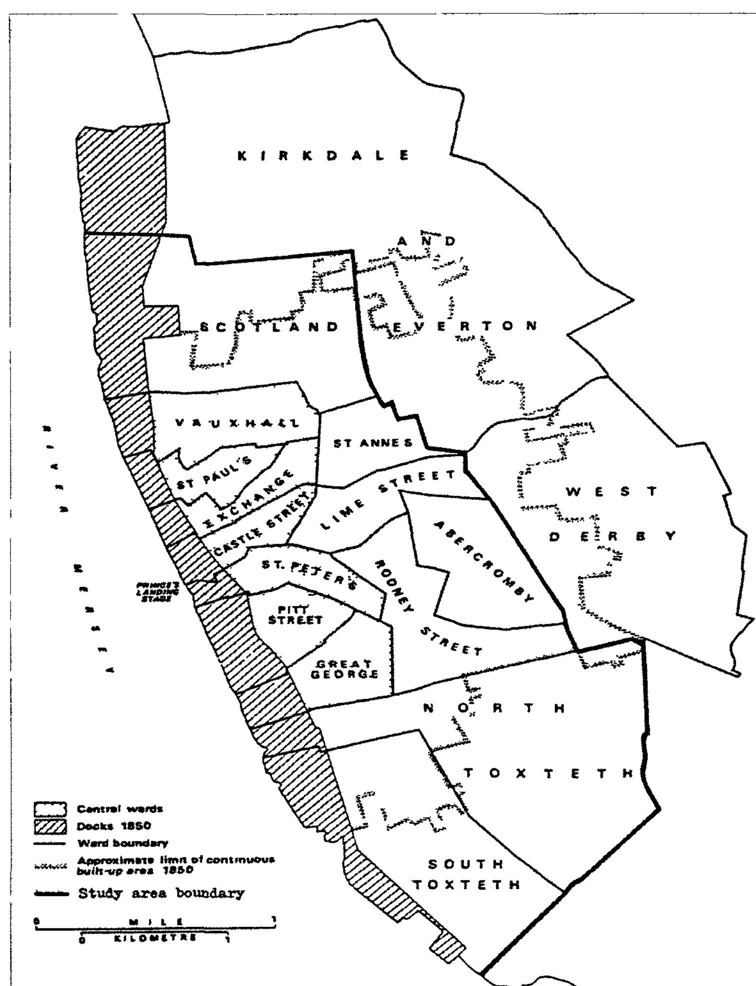
[36] Neal, "The Famine Irish in England and Wales," 74.
[37] *Liverpool Albion*, 10 August 1847.
[38] Neal, *Black '47*, 134, 153.
[39] Neal, "The Famine Irish in England and Wales," 74, estimates that 7219 paupers were buried in St. Mary's and St. Martins-in-the-Fields. Of this total, 5,237 were Catholics, representing 81 percent of the increase in all pauper burials. Another 2,303, mostly Irish Catholics, were buried in St. Anthony's in 1847.
[40] Frank Neal, "Liverpool, the Cemetery of Ireland," in *The Great Hunger Commemoration Service, St. Anthony's Church, Scotland Road, Liverpool, Friday 3 October 1997* (Liverpool: Newsham Press, 2004), 5.

pandemic.[41] While not quite as catastrophic as typhus had been, cholera, according to reports submitted by Dr. Duncan to the city's Health Committee, claimed the lives of 5,245 Liverpudlians.[42] Once again the Irish were hardest hit, particularly in Scotland and Vauxhall wards, "the same district where the fever of 1847 was so destructive,"[43] where as many as one in fourteen residents succumbed to the disease.[44]



Map 1.01. The political wards of the borough, 1851.
Source: Frank Neal, *Sectarian Violence*, 5.

[41] *The Times*, 8 September 1849.
[42] *The Times*, 22 January 1850.
[43] *The Times*, 27 July 1849.
[44] *The Times*, 22 January 1850.

Liverpool in the Wake of the Famine

These crises in public health that struck Liverpool during the Famine years left a lasting impression on the Protestant host society, particularly in terms of how Irish Catholics were subsequently associated with disease, poverty, criminality, sub-standard housing, and sectarian violence—social problems which persisted in Liverpool well into the twentieth century. While there was an established precedent in the 1830s and 1840s of social theorists and investigators constructing an image of the Irish "in his squalor and unreason, in his falsity and drunken violence, as the ready-made nucleus of degradation and disorder,"[45] after the ordeal of the mid-century migration from Ireland, the Famine was an event that became particularly entrenched in the public mind as a powerful symbol of the Irish menace in England's midst. This was especially the case in Victorian Liverpool, where long-settled residents continued to look upon the Irish Catholic population as a threat to public health, order, and decency.[46] Whenever popular fears were roused regarding the behaviour and condition of the lowest orders in Liverpool, the stereotype of the Irish slummy and the legacy of the Famine migration were invariably invoked.

The congested residential areas in the northern docklands and south central Liverpool, where many Famine migrants joined existent working-class Irish Catholic

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[45] Frederick Engels, *Condition of the English Working Class in England* in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Collected Works, vol. 4* (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 390. See also Sir James Phillip Kay-Shuttleworth, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* (London: Ridgway, 1832); M. Leon Faucher, *Manchester in 1844; its Present Condition and Future Prospects* (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1844); and Thomas Carlyle, *Chartism* (London: J. Fraser, 1840).
[46] See Scally, *The End of Hidden Ireland*, 188; and Pooley, "The Irish in Liverpool circa 1850-1940," 85.

communities, were looked upon by the Protestant host society as a fertile breeding ground for the city's social ills.[47] While there were middle-class and skilled working-class Irish migrants who managed to settle in the suburbs of Liverpool, many unskilled Irish Catholics remained dependent on the casual labour market and had little choice but to live in low-rent slums near the docks, especially in the north end.[48] Despite various clearance schemes introduced by the Liverpool Corporation, beginning in 1864 with demolishment of the most dilapidated houses, the area around Scotland Road remained mired in poverty and stigmatized as the one part of the city that was beyond the pale.[49] The north end's enduring reputation as home to "the worst slums in England" was reaffirmed in *Squalid Liverpool*, an 1883 social investigation of poverty in Liverpool, and would change little over the following half century.[50] The structural deficiencies of the dwellings in the area were consistently linked to the depravity of their Irish inhabitants.

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[47] Colin G. Pooley, "The Residential Segregation of Migrant Communities in Mid-Victorian Liverpool," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series*, 2, no. 3 (1977): 373.

[48] Historians generally agree that Irish migrants to Britain formed a diverse group that was not confined to urban ghettos. See E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin Books, 1963), 480; and David Fitzpatrick, "A Curious Middle Place: the Irish in Britain, 1871-1921," in *The Irish in Britain, 1815-1939*, eds. Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (London: Pinter, 1989): 14. In the case of Liverpool, John Papworth, "The Irish in Liverpool, 1835-71: Segregation and Dispersal" (PhD. diss., University of Liverpool, 1982), argues that the Irish were quite dispersed throughout the city. Only half of the city's Irish-born lived in districts with high concentrations of Irish (adjacent to the docks to the south and north of the city centre), and even these areas were not Irish ghettos, as the Irish rarely exceeded half the population of any locale in the city and interacted on a regular basis with neighbouring English workers of the same social class. However, the city's Catholic Irish of the north end were numerous enough to form what John Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse: The History of the Liverpool-Irish, 1800-1939* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 19, describes as an Irish enclave, one protective and defensive of its own political and religious institutions and traditions.

[49] Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse*, 63-64.

[50] *The Times*, 23 August 1933; *Squalid Liverpool: by a Special Commission, Reprinted from the Liverpool Daily Post* (Liverpool: *Daily Post* and *Echo* Offices, Victoria Street and Preston Street, 1883), 77.

Though there was a minority presence of Italian, German, and Polish immigrants in the neighbourhood,[51] municipal authorities, social investigators, and Protestant clerics tended to focus on the preponderance of Irish Catholics—"the most chronically slum-minded people in the country"—that perpetuated "the slum problem" in the north end of Liverpool.[52]

Not only was the north end of the city looked upon as home to the most destitute and depraved of Liverpool society, it was also despised by Orangemen in the city as the stronghold of Irish Catholicism. Sectarian animosities between Protestants and Catholics, which dated back to the 1820s, intensified at mid-century with the arrival of Irish Famine migrants and the resurgence of popular Protestant No-Popery. By the 1880s, Orangemen were more than just a bitter colony of Irishmen, as described by Irish nationalist John Denvir; they had become a vital cog in the Tory electoral machine, which would dominate local politics until the mid-twentieth century.[53] Once merged into the mainstream of Liverpool politics, Orangeism represented a form of Britishness that appealed to many working-class Protestants in the city.[54] With the rapid assimilation of Irish Protestants into the city's larger Protestant community, Irish became synecdoche for Irish Catholic. In processions organized to mark commemorative anniversaries, most notably July 12th and March 17th, Catholic and Protestant workers (often in competition for jobs) regularly took to the streets to lay claim to urban spaces and antagonize each

[51] Boyce, "From Victorian 'Little Ireland' to Heritage Trail," 289.
[52] *The Times*, 23 August 1933, 11.
[53] John Denvir, *The Life Story of an Old Rebel* (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers & Walker, 1910), 19.
[54] Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse*, 188.

other.[55] These public demonstrations could degenerate into violence, particularly at times of heightened religious tension, economic rivalry, and political discord. Thus, many Irish Catholic Liverpudlians, especially those residing in the north end remained ensconced in a "sectarian cocoon," insulated from neighbouring working-class Protestant residential areas northeast of Netherfield Road.[56]

These ethno-religious identities that formed in the aftermath of the Famine migration continued to dominate politics in Liverpool into the mid-twentieth century. Alienated from the dominant Protestant culture, Irish migrants and their descendants developed their own institutions in an effort to assert their political and cultural identity and protect their collective interests. Many Irish in the city turned to the Catholic Church for a sense of solidarity and community; while others in the generation following the Famine aligned themselves with revolutionary forms of Irish nationalism, despite the disapproval of the Catholic hierarchy. Though only a small minority of largely middle class Irish Liverpudlians ended up offering substantive support to the physical-force nationalism of the Young Irelanders in 1848 and the Irish Republican Brotherhood in the 1860s, the appearance of Irish disloyalty intensified anti-Irish prejudice in Liverpool, which was legitimized by "popular Orange Toryism."[57] The Conservative party offered established Protestant Liverpudlians a countervailing force to Irish nationalism and a

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[55] See Frank Neal, *Sectarian Violence: the Liverpool Experience, 1819-1914: an Aspect of Anglo-Irish History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 40.
[56] John Bohstedt, "More than One Working Class: Protestant-Catholic Riots in Edwardian Liverpool," in *Popular Politics, Riot and Labour: Essays in Liverpool History, 1790-1940*, ed. John Belchem (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992), 208-9.
[57] Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse*, 125.

measure of protection against what many perceived as an ever-advancing papist tide from Ireland that threatened to sink their city.[58]

By the mid 1870s, most Irish nationalists in Liverpool, having largely abandoned physical force tactics,[59] embraced a constitutional approach to achieving Irish self-government.[60] While the abortive Fenian rising of 1867 was mythologized as a glorious moment in the ongoing struggle for Irish nationhood, the new movement for Home Rule, which would be a dominant issue in Liverpool politics until the First World War, drew widespread support from the city's Irish population. Various incarnations of Home Rule organizations, including The Home Rule Confederation of Great Britain (1875), the Irish National League of Great Britain (1885), and the United Irish League of Great Britain (1900), along with a network of clubs and friendly societies, most notably the Irish National Foresters (INF) and the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), were active in Liverpool supporting constitutional nationalism and mobilizing the Irish vote in favour of Home Rule. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the appeal of such nationalist organizations had diminished somewhat for the second and third generation Irish in Britain, who were often more focused on political and economic matters germane to their country and city of residence than the ongoing struggle for self-government in

[58] P.J. Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism: a Political and Social History of Liverpool 1868-1939* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1981), 18.
[59] Fitzpatrick, "A Curious Middle Place," 34. Fenian bombing campaigns in Britain between 1881 and 1887 targeted military sites, civic buildings, and tube stations; however, they were orchestrated mostly by Irish American Fenians and drew little popular support from the Irish in Britain.
[60] See L.W. Brady, *T.P. O'Connor and the Liverpool Irish* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1983), 23; and Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism*, 31.

their ancestral homeland.[61] However, Liverpool, more than any other British city, did sustain a strong political culture of Irish nationalism well into the twentieth century. With the extension of the franchise in 1884, the Irish formed an electorate eager to assert their ethnic identity in Liverpool and generally supportive of the political objectives of the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP).[62] Between 1875 and 1922, the city's Irish voters returned 48 Irish Nationalists to city council.[63] In the north end constituency of Scotland Division, Irish voters were numerous enough to re-elect T.P. O'Connor of the IPP as their Member of Parliament from 1885 to 1929. Committed to achieving Home Rule for Ireland and alleviating the socio-economic plight of the Irish Catholic working class in Liverpool, Irish constitutional nationalism remained relevant in a city in which politics was based on competing ethnic identities.

Home Rule Rhetoric and Famine Remembrance

The Famine proved to be a remarkably resilient and versatile memory used by Irish nationalists in Liverpool to promote the policy of Home Rule in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While 1847 was occasionally relegated to the margins in the nationalist political discourse in Liverpool, as it did not always pack the same political punch that 1798, 1803, or 1867—heroic historical memories of physical-force

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[61] See Donald Harman Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer*(Toronto: P.D. Meany Company Inc., Publishers, 1993), 212-213; Fitzpatrick, "A Curious Middle Place," 38; and Roger Swift, *The Irish in Britain, 1815-1914: Perspectives and Sources* (London: The Historical Association, 1990), 25.

[62] Yet, as Bernard O'Connell, "Irish Nationalism in Liverpool, 1873-1923," *Éire-Ireland* 10 (1975): 25, notes, it was difficult for Irish paupers to register as voters.

[63] John Belchem, "The Liverpool-Irish Enclave," in *The Great Famine and Beyond: Irish Migrants in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Donald M. MacRaild (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2000), 140.

nationalism that were incorporated into the political discourse of constitutional nationalists—Irish politicians returned regularly to the Famine as the moment of genesis for the Irish community exiled to Liverpool. Affirming nationalist historical readings, popular since the 1860s, that held the British government and Anglo-Irish landlords responsible for allowing a crop failure to lead to mass starvation and emigration, nationalists in Liverpool recalled the Famine as the Irish historical event that most justified the implementation of Home Rule. Like the Famine migrants themselves, the Liverpool Irish in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (many of whom had no connection to the mid-century migration), were reminded that they too were in exile from their homeland, required to live and work in the most adverse conditions enforced by the labour market and the prejudicial treatment by the host society.

When the occasion called for it, however, Irish politicians could just as easily invert this image of Liverpool's victimized Irish refugees, presenting them as a resilient people, whose fortitude allowed them to overcome the difficulties of the Famine migration and devote themselves to the cause of Irish self-government. It was thus a memory that could be deployed strategically, depending on the audience and political climate of the day. Though the historian L.W. Brady insists that "Liverpool men distanced themselves from these recollections,"[64] there is no doubt that the Famine left "its indelible traces" on Liverpool, and Irish nationalists were inclined to draw attention to those traces as a means of reconnecting the Liverpool Irish to a homeland that was

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[64] Brady, *T.P. O'Connor*, 25.

increasingly remote, and as an assertion of their own moral authority and authenticity as Irish nationalists doing "outpost work" on behalf of Ireland.[65]

The leading Irish nationalists in Liverpool identified the Famine as the historical moment that shaped their decision to devote their lives to winning Home Rule for Ireland. Journalist, historian, and influential Home Rule promoter, John Denvir was born in Antrim but lived most of his life in Liverpool. In his 1910 memoir, *The Life Story of an Old Rebel*, Denvir looked back to his formative experiences as a thirteen year old when the Famine Irish began arriving in Liverpool in droves:

> Young as I was, I shall never forget the days of the Famine, for Liverpool, more than any other place outside of Ireland itself, felt its appalling effects. It was the main artery through which the flying people poured to escape from what seemed a doomed land. Many thousands could get no further, and the condition of the already overcrowded parts of the town in which our people lived became terrible, for the wretched people brought with them the dreaded Famine Fever, and Liverpool became a plague-stricken city…It will not be wondered that one who saw these things, even though he was only a boy, should feel it a duty stronger than life itself to reverse the system of misgovernment which was responsible...I can remember how my blood boiled one day when I saw in a shop window a cartoon of 'Punch'—a large potato, which was a caricature of O'Connell's head and face, with the title—'The Real Potato Blight'.[66]

Motivated by a profound sense of disillusionment with British governance—"the system that allowed our people to perish of starvation"—Denvir devoted himself as a writer and a political organizer to Home Rule, a movement he described as "our struggle for sheer existence." In his estimation, "If Ireland had had the making of her own laws when the potato crop failed, not a single human being would have perished from starvation."[67]

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[65] Denvir, *The Life Story*, 1.
[66] Ibid., 53-54.
[67] Ibid., 269.

Like Denvir, T.P. O'Connor, journalist and longstanding M.P. for the riding of Scotland Division, recalled the profound impact that the Famine had had on him as a youngster in Athlone. Born in 1848, O'Connor was too young to retain a memory of the Famine, but his understanding of the catastrophe was nurtured by his community: "In my boyhood there were plenty of middle-aged men who had lived through the Famine and seen it close at hand. From the stories I heard from their lips I was able to get a more vivid picture of what the Famine really meant than in all the hours I spent over the study of its events." According to O'Connor, these impressions of the Famine were shared by other members of the Parnellite Party, and acted upon them as the guiding force behind the Home Rule movement. The Famine was always in the "background in their mind," but moved to the forefront with the recurrence of crop failures, food shortages, and evictions in late Victorian Ireland. Home Rulers were thus "haunted by the horrible spectre of the renewal of the old terrible days. They might well be forgiven if they thought that there was a fresh possibility of another and a final wreckage of the Irish population and the end of all things."[68]

O'Connor and Denvir presented their own memories of the Famine as the essence of a larger collective memory present in "all parts of the world the doomed race fled," and one that could rally the diaspora in defence of Ireland.[69] Sticking to a nationalist script, which presented the Famine as the most devastating example of British misrule in Ireland, both Denvir and O'Connor made the most of their personal exposure (whether

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[68] T.P. O'Connor, *Memoirs of an Old Parliamentarian, vol. 1.* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1929), 80.
[69] Ibid., 78-79.

first or second-hand) to the suffering of the Irish at home and abroad at mid-century. By "introducing the terrible Irish Famine and its consequences...as part of...[his] own experiences," Denvir sought to connect with all those Irish who arrived in Liverpool "as emigrants or as settlers in England."[70] Similarly, O'Connor used his memoir to bridge the personal and the collective, insisting on the importance of "the memories of things that were told at the knees of their parents or grandparents."[71] Nationalist leaders thus encouraged the Liverpool Irish, and the diaspora more generally, to draw from this common pool of Famine memories as the emotional wellspring of Irish nationalism.

While it may well be true, as his biographer insists, that O'Connor's attitude towards the Famine was "detached" and "cliché-ridden,"[72] the nationalist leader was politically astute enough to legitimize memories of the catastrophe (even those derived post-facto) as a way of garnering support for himself and for the issue of Home Rule in Liverpool and Irish constituencies elsewhere in Britain, Ireland, and North America.[73] Presenting their experiences and memories as representative of all Irish migrants to Liverpool and diasporic points beyond, the city's leading nationalists were validating their claims and those of the Liverpool Irish to an authentic Irishness. Memory of the Famine—whether acquired as an eyewitness, passed down through family lore, or, more commonly, absorbed through a range of Irish cultural products (including nationalists'

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[70] Denvir, *The Life Story*, 269.
[71] O'Connor, *Memoirs of an Old Parliamentarian*, 80.
[72] Brady, *T.P. O'Connor*, 13.
[73] Ibid., 25, cites O'Connor making the most of Famine memory in a 1911 speech to a Cork audience designed to elicit support for the United Irish League of Great Britain: "I spoke in the presence of Liverpool men whose fathers had told them that their people died like flies in the hospitals of Liverpool, Manchester, and Glasgow."

memoirs)—was used by nationalist politicians to bolster their leadership and the diasporic movement to secure Home Rule. Citing the catastrophe as the historical wrong motivating the struggle for Irish self-government, John Denvir and T.P. O'Connor's personal reminiscences helped ensure that Famine memory was formative in the construction of Liverpool Irish identity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[74]

While the Famine featured prominently in nationalists' autobiographies as the emotional fulcrum of the Home Rule movement in Liverpool, their historical and political writings, which adopt a more empirical and objective approach, also focused on the Famine as a key historical turning point for Irish nationalism. O'Connor devoted considerable energy earlier in his career to writing about the economic and political context of the Famine. In *The Parnell Movement* O'Connor analyzes Irish exports of livestock and grains during the Famine years (an approach that historian James Donnelly Jr. notes failed to take Irish imports into account),[75] arguing that "there was exported in cattle, sheep, and swine alone in this year—to say nothing whatever of the 969,490 of quarters of cereals—nearly half a million more in money value than was required to feed three millions of starving people in the same year."[76] Such figures confirmed radical

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[74] Liam Harte, "Migrancy, Performativity and Autobiographical Identity," *Irish Studies Review*, 14, no. 2 (2006): 218, points out that such autobiographical narratives, expressing "selfless devotion to the aspirations of the motherland," conveyed the claims of belonging of migrant groups to an Irish "'imagined' political community."
[75] Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 219.
[76] T.P. O'Connor, *The Parnell Movement, with a Sketch of Irish Parties from 1843* (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench & Co., 1886), 122.

nationalist John Mitchel's assertion that it was indeed "an artificial famine."[77] Food shortages in Ireland following periodic crop failures in the 1870s and 1880s reminded O'Connor that "starvation in the midst of food" could return if the Irish did not repeal the Act of Union and gain control over their own political destiny.[78]

In his own historical study of Anglo-Irish relations, Liverpool's other leading nationalist, John Denvir, also took up this notion that Irish self-government was the only means by which Ireland could be protected from the recurrence of such a catastrophe. Though he does not attempt the statistical work of O'Connor, Denvir's *The Irish in Britain from the Earliest Times to the Fall and Death of Parnell* insists on "the necessity for Ireland having the making of her own laws, and thus being able to provide for all her people in their own land."[79] Like O'Connor, Denvir also relied upon the nationalist conviction that "there was food enough grown to feed the whole people, [but] under alien rule it was not for them."[80] In their respective historical accounts of Anglo-Irish relations, published at the height of the Home Rule agitation, O'Connor and Denvir reiterated a nationalist interpretation of the Famine, citing the preventable catastrophe as essential to their political and cultural identity, and by extension, that of the Liverpool Irish.

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[77] Ibid., 123; John Mitchel, *The History of Ireland from the Treaty of Limerick to the Present Time: Being a Continuation of History of the Abbé Macgeoghegan* (Glasgow: Cameron & Ferguson, 1869), 243.
[78] O'Connor, *The Parnell Movement*, 557.
[79] Ibid., 123.
[80] John Denvir, *The Irish in Britain from the Earliest Times to the Fall and Death of Parnell* (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., 1892), 120.

Though the mid-century exodus from Ireland represented the foundational moment of the Liverpool Irish, nationalists in the city often lamented the fact that the Famine had drained Ireland of its lifeblood, sending its "young, strong and enterprising" into exile, an ongoing trend that they felt undermined Ireland's chances of achieving nationhood in the years leading up to the First World War.[81] As the main organ of the Liverpool Irish, the *Liverpool Catholic* Herald (*LCH*) kept its readers abreast of the difficulties faced by "the people at home, with their many sorrows and disabilities" who were continually at risk of being sent into the same exile as the Famine Irish.[82] This notion of emigration as exile "forced by English oppression," which was central to the nationalist interpretation of the Famine,[83] informed the political response of the Liverpool Irish to Irish emigration during the struggle for Home Rule. As the *LCH* insisted, keeping the Irish race at home was "the fervent wish of every Irish exile in Liverpool."[84]

The painful legacy of emigration, though, was neither the exclusive province of Ireland nor that of the Famine migrants; in the political rhetoric of Liverpool Irish nationalism, the experience of exile spanned generations and the Irish Sea. Regardless of the timing and circumstances of their arrival in the city, the migration of all the Irish in Liverpool was represented as analogous to those of Irish Famine migrants. While T.P. O'Connor was adept at recounting Ireland's historical hardships, when addressing his Liverpool constituents he was just as likely to emphasize that "the real tragedy of Ireland

[81] *LCH*, 20 January 1899 and 17 March 1905.
[82] *LCH*, 10 March 1899.
[83] See Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 305.
[84] *LCH*, 13 January 1899.

was the tragedy of the Irish who had left Ireland, and not those who remained."[85] Reporting on a dinner at the Irish Club in 1906 at which O'Connor claimed that all of the Irish in the city "had left Ireland under circumstances which were almost tragic," the *LCH* argued that O'Connor's constituents in the Scotland Road Division, who "came to Liverpool, flying from disease and pestilence," were "an epitome of the history of our people."[86] In their exile in Liverpool, a city that John Denvir famously dubbed a "stony-hearted stepmother," the Irish colony remained "unregarded or despised" in "the heart...of the enemy's country."[87] For Denvir, the experience of exile, born of the Famine migration, was a consequence not just of physical separation from Ireland but of profound cultural dislocation and socio-economic disadvantage enforced by the host society. In this regard, little had changed for the Irish exiles in Liverpool since the arrival of their Famine-era predecessors. Irish newcomers to the city in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were "drawn into the same miserable mode of life as the friends who have come to England before them" with recourse only "to the hardest, the most precarious, and the worst paid employments."[88]

The Famine migration to Liverpool, however, was also on occasion recalled as the starting point of a proud and resilient Irish diaspora. In this narrative strand of Famine remembrance the tragedy of 1847 dominates the frame, but it also serves to foreground the subsequent achievements of the Liverpool Irish, particularly their capacity for overcoming the challenges of exile and organizing in defence of Ireland. John Denvir, a

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[85] *LCH*, 6 November 1903.
[86] *LCH*, 14 December 1906.
[87] Denvir, *The Life Story*, 9; *LCH*, 17 March 1905.
[88] Denvir, *The Life Story*, 7-8.

notable subscriber to what Irish historian Liam Kennedy has identified as MOPE (Most Oppressed People Ever) syndrome,[89] was skilled at shifting his focus from Irish victimization to their triumph over adversity:

> One result of the famine has been to raise up a mighty power on the side of Ireland, which has baffled the machinations of her oppressors ....None are more ardent in her cause than the Irish in Britain, many of whom, or their fathers, came here from Ireland at the time of the famine—not in a well-regulated emigration, but flung on these shores like the wreck of a routed army. ...If it has been a calamity and a weakness, it has also added enormously to their strength.[90]

This reconstruction of the Famine migration presents the Irish as exceptional not only in terms of their incomparable history of suffering but also in their inimitable will to prevail. One year before Denvir's memoir was published, John Redmond, sharing a platform with T.P. O'Connor at a Home Rule rally in 1909, was similarly struck by this paradoxical legacy of the Famine. In awe of how the Irish "had miraculously survived persecutions and famine such as had fallen, perhaps, upon no other race in the world's history," Redmond reminded his Liverpool Irish audience that they "had been preserved for holy things, to keep aloft the banner of high religious, moral, social, and political ideals."[91] Thus Home Rule politicians credited the Liverpool Irish for their role in transforming the Famine migration from curse to curative, weakness to strength on behalf of Ireland.

In the stock nationalist narrative, largely conceived and popularized in an Irish-American context, the Famine was the moment of involuntary exile in which

[89] Liam Kennedy, *Colonialism, Religion and Nationalism in Ireland* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1996), 121, 217.
[90] Denvir, *The Irish in Britain*, 121.
[91] *LCH*, 2 April 1909.

emigrants possessing nothing but their fidelity to faith and fatherland struggled to overcome bigotry and persecution to find a place for themselves in their adopted homeland. During the latter stages of Home Rule agitation, political leaders of the Liverpool Irish, the group most notoriously and negatively associated with Irish immigration to Britain, periodically aligned themselves with this Irish-American model, drawing attention to Famine exile as part of a shared historical burden borne heroically by Irish groups on both sides of the Atlantic. Liverpool Irish politicians expressed their admiration for the achievements of their diasporic compatriots across the Atlantic whose economic success and considerable political influence was put to use for the cause of Irish nationalism. For John Denvir, the way in which "the Irish exiles in America…poured their wealth into the lap of their island mother…to some extent counterbalanced the tragedy of the Famine."[92] T.P. O'Connor, who regularly toured North America,[93] recognized the struggles that still faced diasporic groupings in the United States; however, his political rhetoric would play to his audience by celebrating the enormous leaps forward taken by the Irish in North America in the two generations since the Famine.[94]

The *LCH* was also instrumental in tracing the teleological narrative of progress from starvation to salvation that connected Irish communities across the diaspora. In addition to offering periodic reports of the discovery of Famine-era burial sites in

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[92] Denvir, *The Life Story*, 270.
[93] *LCH*, 17 March 1899; *LCH*, 31 March 1899. O'Connor spent seven months of 1899 in the United States, delivering speeches in cities from New York to San Francisco.
[94] *LCH*, 4 December 1909. At one Boston meeting in late 1909 presided over by T.P. O'Connor $10,000 was raised in support of "the Irish cause."

Ireland,[95] the *LCH* on occasion reminded its readers of the tragedy of the Famine migration to North American port cities, whether it be the erection of a monument memorializing "the scores of Irish emigrants who were wrecked and their bodies washed ashore at Cohasset, Massachusetts, within touch of the promised land of their exile and of their hopes,"[96] or the discovery in 1914 of the remains of twelve Famine migrants who died from ship fever in Montreal by workmen digging the foundations of a house.[97] However, by celebrating the persistent "loyalty of the scattered Clan-na-Gael to the cause of Irish freedom," and the many achievements of "the cheerful, mirth-loving people of Ireland who came to America," the *LCH* made sure that a note of triumphalism resonated amidst the "sad echo[es] of the Famine."[98] Irish nationalist rhetoric sought to align the Liverpool Irish with their exiled yet increasingly middle class counterparts in North America by taking stock of "the progress in numbers, wealth and influence of the Irish people…marked by the gradual increase in the number of churches and schools, which have been built for the most part by the Irish and their descendants" since the Famine migration.[99] Though in large part wishful thinking, as many of the Irish of the north end of Liverpool continued to struggle to make ends meet, the Famine was at times recalled as the seminal, albeit tragic, historical moment in an idealized developmental narrative of

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[95] *LCH,* 11 September 1909.
[96] *LCH,* 17 January 1914.
[97] *LCH,* 6 June 1914.
[98] *LCH,* 17 March 1905; *LCH,* 30 May 1914; LCH, 6 June 1914.
[99] Denvir, *The Life Story*, 7-8. Timothy J. Meagher, *Inventing Irish America: Generation, Class, and Ethnic Identity in a New England City, 1880-1928* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2001), 5, argues that by the turn of the century "the expansion of the Irish American middle class had worked a fundamental revolution in the lives of Irish communities all across America."

the Irish in Liverpool, a community empowered by its ties to a larger diasporic nationalist network active in supporting the cause of Irish self-government.

However, while Famine remembrance could reinforce Irish transatlantic connections, it was not always in the best interests of the Liverpool Irish to call upon Irish-American nationalist interpretations of the catastrophe. Compared to many of their American counterparts, Irish nationalists in Liverpool—the majority of whom supported the achievement of Irish self-government through constitutional means—were less interested in using the Famine to stoke the fires of violent liberation from British tyranny.[100] Though the "rebellions" of 1848 and 1867—purportedly inspired by "the sight of a perishing people in one of the most fruitful lands on earth"—were credited for pushing the issue of Irish self-government into the realm of electoral politics,[101] and some of the motifs of physical force nationalism had been worked into the political discourse of Liverpool constitutional nationalists, it was the ballot rather than the bullet that gave the Liverpool Irish "magnificent opportunities…of striking blows for the welfare of their native land."[102] In this context, the Famine was still cited as the most grievous example of British misrule and rampant landlordism and a compelling precedent in the case for Irish self-government, but it was rarely a memory deployed in service of militant Irish nationalism in Liverpool.

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[100] See *LCH*, 28 March 1914.
[101] Denvir, *The Life Story*, 269.
[102] *LCH*, 17 March 1905.

Figure 1.01. T.P. O'Connor, October 1909

As political leaders of the Liverpool Irish were retroactively charging the British government and landlords with murder by starvation and exile by eviction, they were also sure to stress that culpability for the Famine did not extend to "many a noble soul in Britain," who, as John Denvir insisted, "helped the Irish people in this crisis."[103] This distinction was important to make as the Liverpool Irish struggled to defend and define their hyphenated identity. T.P. O'Connor was similarly adamant that it was the British government and Anglo-Irish landlords and not ordinary citizens who were accountable

[103] Denvir, *The Irish in Britain*, 120.

for forcing the Irish people into "death by hunger on the waysides of Ireland, and into wholesale emigration, through eviction." [104]

> There was scarcely a pious home in England in which families were not practicing self-denial in love and sympathy for Ireland. Families saved money for the relief of the starving Irish. This is a tragic contrast which has gone almost without a break through the relations of England and Ireland. The English people as a whole, and when they had any knowledge of the facts, showed themselves full of love and sympathy for Ireland, while successive Governments remained with blind eyes and deaf ears even to the most poignant appeals of the people of Ireland in their agony and hunger and oppression."[105]

Thus, in an effort to "get into the English mind what the Irish Famine meant to the Irishman," ordinary English people were drawn into the narrative of remembrance, playing a sympathetic role as foil to their callous leaders.[106] This version of Famine memory in which English authorities were accused and their constituents absolved was acceptable to most of the Liverpool Irish, who by and large did not subscribe to what O'Connor described as "the fanatical hatred for England of the men and women of the Irish race in America" that Famine remembrance was known to arouse.[107] Fashioning a version of the Famine that focused on the ill will of governing and landowning elites, while underlining (and overstating) the compassion shown to the Irish by ordinary English people, fit the nationalist agenda of broadening the British base of support for Home Rule.[108]

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[104] O'Connor, *Memoirs of an Old Parliamentarian*, 155-156.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid., 78-79.
[107] Ibid., 80.
[108] Steven Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939* (Buckingham, 1993), 80-82.

If such affecting reconstructions of Irish-English solidarity during the Famine failed to resonate with Irish constituents or win over British voters to the cause of Home Rule, Liverpool Irish nationalists could on occasion adopt a more pragmatic approach to Famine remembrance. They argued that revoking British rule in Ireland—a system of governance that decimated the Irish during the Famine and destabilized the Empire ever since—was in the best interests of all British people. Speaking at Liverpool's Adelphi Theatre, before what the *LCH* described as "perhaps the greatest demonstration that Liverpool has ever seen in the annals of Irish politics" (a common description by the *LCH* of Liverpool Irish events), T.P. O'Connor explained that the "national hemorrhage," which had halved Ireland's population in the half-century since the Famine, was not only a terrible legacy for the Irish, but "Englishmen were beginning to awake to the conviction that the diminution by bad laws and unwise government of the millions of the Irish people in Ireland had been a loss not only to the people of Ireland, but had been a blow at the safety and security of their own empire." O'Connor was convinced that "Mr. Balfour," while at the helm of the Foreign Office, "could carry a measure of self-government for Ireland with the assent of the people of this country," if it were not for the staunch opposition from the House of Commons and "the Irish landlords"—the same groups that had overseen the horror of the Famine years, which were now "sitting once again, like two Crows on a Gate."[109]

These invocations of the Famine formed part of a larger commemorative ethos among Irish nationalists in Liverpool who mobilized memories of key historical moments

[109] *LCH*, 30 March 1900.

to challenge the legitimacy of British rule in Ireland.[110] Like many of their counterparts in Ireland and throughout the diaspora at the turn of the century, the Liverpool Irish were intent on remembering "the sacrifices of the patriots of the past,"[111] particularly those of the United Irishmen of 1798 and the Manchester Martyrs of 1867.[112] However, commemorations of these nationalist icons, which celebrated what Peter Gray calls the "heroic masculine ideals of Irish militancy,"[113] were rarely straightforward, especially in Liverpool where honouring an Irish revolutionary heritage certainly did little to encourage voters from outside the nationalist bloc to support Home Rule, while often exposing rifts between constitutional and separatist nationalists.

The process of organizing the 1798 centenary observance in Liverpool was particularly contentious, as representatives of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) took charge of the commemoration.[114] Uneasy with militant republicans in the IRB shaping a commemorative message that might advocate violent upheaval in Ireland, the local Irish Nationalist Party (INP) attempted to distance itself from the commemoration.[115] Though interested in paying tribute to the heroic Irish patriots of

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[110] Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse*, 185.
[111] *LCH*, 15 March 1907.
[112] The centenary of the 1798 rebellion attracted commemorative interest in Ireland and North America. See Gary Owens, "Nationalist Monuments in Ireland, c.1870-1914: Symbolism and Ritual," in *Ireland: Art into History*, eds. Raymond Gillespie and Brian P. Kennedy (Dublin: Town House and Country House, 1994), 106; Gary Owens, "The Manchester Executions and the Nationalist Imagination," in *Images, Icons, and the Irish Nationalist Imagination*, ed. Lawrence McBride (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), 18-36; and Timothy J. O'Keefe, "The 1898 Efforts to Celebrate the United Irishmen: the '98 Centennial," *Éire-Ireland* 23 (1988): 51-73;
[113] Peter Gray, "Memory and the Commemoration of the Great Irish Famine," in *The Memory of Catastrophe*, eds. Peter Gray and Kendrick Oliver (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 49.
[114] Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse*, 144-145.
[115] O'Connell, "Irish Nationalism in Liverpool," 30.

1798 who fought for Ireland's freedom, the INP was prepared to embrace physical force nationalism as an inspirational precursor, but not as a legitimate alternative to the constitutional movement for Home Rule.[116] Thus, the 1898 commemoration was, as John Belchem has noted, "a lacklustre affair with a small attendance."[117] While as many as 5,000 Irish Liverpudlians created a commotion at the docks as they prepared to board ships destined for commemorative events held in Dublin,[118] the centenary celebration in Liverpool itself failed to unite the city's Irish nationalists, despite the insistence of the *LCH* that " the lesson...learned from '98 is the lesson of Unity—the necessity for closing our ranks, of forgetting the past strife and dissension and of facing the common enemy as one man."[119] While 1798 periodically attracted the interest of Liverpool Irish nationalists over the course of the first decade of the twentieth century,[120] its centenary commemoration deepened fissures within the Irish nationalist community, which had been apparent since Parnell's political demise following his divorce scandal in 1890.

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[116] *LCH*, 31 March 1899. T.P. O'Connor's recollection of 1798 was typical of his efforts to appropriate the legacy of militant republicanism in service of constitutional nationalism: "There are many here before me this afternoon who are grand-children of men who fought at Vinegar Hill, and my grandfather, I may tell you, was there. We are here to tell all political parties that the man who fought at Vinegar Hill employed very different weapons from those we employ when we go into ballot-boxes at an election here, but in that so far they demanded, so we demand that Irishmen should be governed by the opinions and convictions of their own people and their own representatives."

[117] Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse*, 182-183.

[118] O'Connell, "Irish Nationalism in Liverpool," 30.

[119] *LCH*, 13 January 1899.

[120] *LCH*, 16 March 1900 (a short story, "The Logic of a Pike," immortalizing the heroes of the Irish rebellion was published to mark St. Patrick's Day); *LCH*, 18 March 1904 (notice of a public lecture on Wolfe Tone); *LCH*, 15 March 1907 (Wolfe Tone's heroism was remembered); *LCH*, 26 April 1907 (Austin Harford offered his support for the construction of a memorial at Enniscorthy, County Wexford, to honour those who died in 1798).

The efforts made in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to commemorate Fenianism also caught the attention of the Liverpool Irish, particularly the erection in 1898 of the Moston memorial (a six-foot Celtic Cross) in Salford, fifty kilometres east of Liverpool. The Cross was designed to honour the memory of the Manchester Martyrs—William Allen, Michael Larkin and Michael O'Brien—who were hanged in public on November 23,1867, ten days following their botched rescue attempt of two Fenian prisoners from a police van, during which a policeman was shot and killed. As was the case during the 1798 centenary commemorations, Irish nationalists contested ownership of the Martyrs' memorial.[121] However, in the years leading up to the First World War, constitutional nationalists in Manchester and Liverpool, often with the support of the Catholic Church, were largely successful in wresting control of the memory from militant republicans.[122] The *LCH* was particularly adept at incorporating the memory of Fenianism into the struggle for Irish Home Rule. In an effort to revitalize the memory of 1867, the *LCH* offered its readers updates on the welfare of the father of one of "the young martyrs" living in Liverpool,[123] coverage of visits to the city by forerunners of the Fenian movement, including O'Donovan Rossa and O'Meagher Condon,[124] and accounts of public appearances by such Irish nationalists as Austin Harford, leader of the INP members on the city council, who delivered finely calibrated

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[121] Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse*, 182-183. Although nationalists in Manchester and Ireland largely funded the construction of this memorial, groups of Liverpool Irish did assist in fundraising and participated in the 1898 unveiling ceremonies, as well as subsequent annual commemorative ceremonies at the Moston site.
[122] Mervyn Busteed, "Research Report on Irish Nationalist Processions in late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century Manchester," *North West Geography* 1, no. 2 (2001): 37.
[123] *LCH*, 17 March 1905.
[124] *LCH*, 9 March 1906; *LCH*, 4 September 1909.

speeches at once celebrating "the heritage bequeathed by the men of '67" and insisting that "the impelling feature of the '67 movement was to point out to Parnell that the Parliamentary movement was the only way to success for Ireland."[125]

These key historical events in the nationalist commemorative calendar were symbolically linked to the Famine through the common theme of heroic suffering "endured to achieve…[Ireland's] freedom."[126] However, while Irish nationalists in the city sought various ways of commemorating 1798 and 1867 as high points in the history of Irish resistance to British rule, the Liverpool Irish ultimately remained at some remove from these memories. It was difficult for Liverpudlians of Irish heritage to access "The sense of the glory of the Men of Wexford" when very few had actually "trodden" on Irish soil.[127] And no matter how much Liverpool nationalists expressed a nostalgic affinity for Fenian resistance to British rule, the Manchester Martyrs would always be seen as the sons of the city in which they were executed. Moreover, commemorating the violent struggle to free Ireland from British rule did not resonate with all Irish nationalists in Liverpool, particularly as the threat posed by physical-force nationalists to the security of the empire had diminished significantly by the beginning of the twentieth century. While 1798 and 1867 were remembered as important nationalist milestones, affording the Liverpool Irish opportunities to publicly affirm their collective identity, the Famine, as a catastrophe that visited Liverpool with exceptional intensity, was an historical memory

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[125] *LCH*, 30 November 1912.
[126] According to the *LCH*, 15 March 1907, the Irish "braved the worst of dangers and laughed at dungeon, scaffold, or expatriation so long as the suffering was for Ireland or endured to achieve her freedom."
[127] *LCH*, 6 July 1906.

that had a special salience in the city. Recalled as the moment of expatriation from which the Liverpool Irish developed, the Famine represented an emotionally potent point of contact with Ireland. However, it was also an historical memory that had application locally, particularly in relation to working class issues of poverty and housing that many Irish Liverpudlians continued to contend with at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Despite John Denvir's insistence that "the children and grandchildren of Irish-born parents consider themselves just as much Irish as those born on 'the old sod' itself," and thus remained committed to "the cause of Irish nationality,"[128] the Liverpool Irish of the northern docklands were increasingly preoccupied with their own struggle to feed and house themselves. The local leadership of the Irish National Party, which by 1898 was mostly Liverpool-born, responded by devoting more of its political energy to social and economic matters of pressing local concern to its constituents.[129] Led by Austin Harford, INP politicians and trade union leaders in the years before the First World War developed a political movement known as Nat-Labism that sought to improve the working conditions of casual labourers on the docks and housing for the poor Irish in the city's north end.[130] While Home Rule remained a priority for nationalist representatives at the municipal and national level, by the early 1900s the movement for achieving Irish self-government was accompanied by a program of socio-economic reform.

In this context, the Famine, which again proved its adaptability as an historical memory, was occasionally called upon to give shape to a Liverpool Irish identity fusing

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[128] Denvir, *The Life Story*, 2.
[129] Belchem, "The Liverpool-Irish Enclave," 141.
[130] Sam Davies, *Liverpool, Labour: Social and Political Influences on the Development of the Labour Party in Liverpool, 1900-39* (Keele, Staffordshire: Keele University Press, 1996), 69-73.

ethnic and class interests. T.P. O'Connor, who in the 1890s was often criticized for his preoccupation with the struggle for Home Rule at the expense of his constituents' social welfare, became increasingly attentive in the early years of the century to the difficulties faced by the Liverpool Irish in the northern docklands, which he believed had persisted since the Famine migration. He argued that the continual flow of Irish migrants into Liverpool would simply "perpetuate the tragedy, the monument of which he saw around him in the houses of the Scotland Division."[131] Home Rule would ensure that the Irish would no longer have to follow in the footsteps of the Famine Irish and experience the grinding poverty that was still in evidence in the slums of Liverpool at the beginning of the twentieth century.[132] Like O'Connor, John Denvir recalled the dire effects of the Famine migration, insisting that he continued to see "the traces of these days in the wretched social condition of but too many of them and their descendants." [133] Thus the north end of Liverpool, overcrowded with poor Irish Catholics, became fixed in memory as a part of the city's built environment in which the tragic legacy of the Famine was re-enacted on a daily basis.

There was no shame attached to this discursive reconstruction of the Irish north side of the city as a Famine site. While political representatives called for the amelioration of conditions confronting this community long relegated to the city's

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[131] *LCH*, 6 November 1903.
[132] *LCH*, 21 December 1907. The fortunes of the city's Irish had improved little since 1891, when an analysis of the occupations of 1,000 Irish-born males in Liverpool, published as part of the English Census, suggested that Irish men were overrepresented among general labourers; and were five times more likely than their counterparts in the local workforce to be dock labourers. See Fitzpatrick, "A Curious Middle Place," 21.
[133] Denvir, *The Irish in Britain*, 121.

economic margins, there was also a sense of pride in its resilience through a half-century of hardship. Insofar as it was what set them apart as Irish Liverpudlians, their poverty, bequeathed to them by Famine migrants, was closely linked to their ethnicity.[134] Though this was partly a matter of ascription by the host society as "the Other within" to the city's populist Protestant identity,[135] Liverpool nationalist politicians (themselves largely middle-class) cultivated the notion that the authentic Irish were the hardworking but impoverished Liverpudlians who formed an ethnic enclave in the city's north end.[136] When the occasion called for it, nationalists were sure to celebrate the achievements of Irish Liverpudlians who enjoyed professional or mercantile success, as well as those shopkeepers and publicans in the lower ranks of the middle class; however, there was, as John Belchem has observed, "inverse pride in the virtue to be found among those at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy."[137] The city's nationalists valorized the poor Irish of the north end, a community cast in the same mould since 1847, as the true measure of Irishness in Liverpool. The slums of the northern docklands, identified by nationalists as the foundation of the Irish colony in Liverpool, and built up in political rhetoric as a monument to the tragedy of 1847, gave some structure to a nationalist mode of Famine remembrance, which presented Irish Liverpudlians as an embattled underclass

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[134] Belchem, *Merseypride: Essays in Liverpool Exceptionalism* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 104.
[135] Michael De Nie, "A Medley Mob of Irish-American Plotters and Irish Dupes: The British Press and Transatlantic Fenianism," *Journal of British Studies* 40 (April 2001): 241, takes issue with Linda Colley's *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992) for failing to emphasize the point that Irish Catholics in Britain were "the most important and consistently used out-group against which Britons measured themselves."
[136] Two generations of Anglo-Irish evangelicals, social investigators, and Tory politicians had been instrumental in portraying the city's Irish as degraded papists who posed the most serious political, economic, religious, and moral threat to Liverpool's Protestant culture.
[137] Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse*, 42.

forced to turn inwards towards local political, cultural, and religious institutions and traditions to defend against incursions from the city's Protestant majority.

Liverpool's Martyr Priests and Famine Parishes, 1897-1909

The nationalism of the Liverpool Irish at the turn of the century was not only tied closely to issues of class, it was inextricably bound to their religious identity. While the Catholic Church had been adamant in its opposition to physical-force nationalism in the generation following the Famine,[138] from the 1870s until the First World War, a period in which constitutionalism established its dominance, Irish nationalism and Catholicism in Liverpool formed "a symbiotic relationship which made Irish, Catholic, and Catholic, Irish."[139] This communion between faith and nation was idealized by John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, in 1909 when he told a Liverpool audience that "The belief of Irishmen in the future triumph of their country and nationality was something akin to their belief in the existence of the Almighty."[140] While not always willing to elevate Redmond's patriotism to such a lofty spiritual plane, lower ranking clerics in Liverpool's working class parishes continually harkened back to "the green isle of Erin," celebrating the "religious instinct which cherished nationality."[141] Often throwing their support behind nationalist politicians, many of the city's priests emphasized the importance of the collaboration between the Catholic faith and Irish

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[138] See Donald M. MacRaild, "'Abandon Hibernicisation': Priests, Ribbonmen and an Irish street fight in the north-east of England in 1858," *Institute of Historical Research* 76, no. 194 (November 2003): 560.
[139] Belchem, *Popular Politics, Riot and Labour*, 13.
[140] *LCH*, 2 April 1909.
[141] *LCH*, 23 March 1906.

nationality in securing Irish independence and maintaining the social and spiritual welfare of the Liverpool Irish.[142]

However, this partnership between Irish nationalism and Catholicism, brokered most assiduously at a local parish level, did not always sit easily with the hierarchy of the English Catholic church. While Liverpool's Catholic Bishop, Thomas Whiteside, was convinced that "To an Irishman, Faith and Fatherland are so closely-entwined that to strengthen or to weaken one is to strengthen or to weaken the other,"[143] such views were not representative of many within the Church hierarchy, which generally sought to distance British Catholicism from the movement for Irish self-government.[144] The institutional inclination of the Catholic Church in England was to delimit Irish political and historical expressions that might embolden nationalism.

The Church's most notable attempt to ensure that the nationalist sympathies of the Irish in England did not override their Catholicism or undercut their allegiance to the British state was through the introduction of state-assisted Catholic elementary education.[145] In collaboration with the State, the Church, "developed a strategy to win its Irish congregation over to a version of Catholicism which entailed denationalization, attempting to substitute a religious identity for the Irish national identity."[146]

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[142] In *Class and Ethnicity*, Steven Fielding insists that this ethno-religious identity, which fused nationalism and Catholicism, in many ways superseded class.
[143] *LCH*, 23 March 1906.
[144] Fitzpatrick, "A Curious Middle Place," 32.
[145] John Bohstedt, "More than One Working Class," 208, notes that "The Catholic school network in Liverpool reached all the way from elementary parish schools to secondary colleges plus the convent of Notre Dame and the Jesuit seminary."
[146] Mary J. Hickman, "The Religio-Ethnic Identities of Teenagers of Irish Descent," in *Catholics in England, 1950-2000: Historical and Sociological Perspectives*, ed. Michael P. Hornsby-Smith (London: Cassell, 1999), 184.

Accordingly, students of Irish Catholic descent learned little of their country of origin. The Catholic readers that were used rarely examined Ireland's history, though, as Mary Hickman has noted, they did praise "the Catholicity of the Irish as their outstanding feature."[147] In his autobiography, John Denvir attests that "there was nothing very Irish" in his education while attending Copperas Hill schools in Liverpool.[148] A generation later, little had changed for Pat O'Mara, who in his *Autobiography of A Liverpool Irish Slummy*, describes the absence of an Irish perspective at St. Peter's on Seel Street: "an English school filled mainly with Irish-Catholic Boys" in which "the Empire and the sacredness of its preservation ran through every text-book like a leitmotif." This educational approach was intended to counter the threat posed to the State by Irish national politics while securing the loyalty of the Irish Catholic working class to the Church.

However, the institutional attempt "to incorporate and denationalize the Irish in Britain" was often undermined by parish priests who reinforced the nationalism of their congregation, despite chastisements from the English Catholic hierarchy.[149] Pat O'Mara recalls one colourful Irish infusion into what he considered an otherwise bland English education. Father Toomey, a priest in St. Vincent's parish, who O'Mara describes as a "young Fenian" that "hated the English more bitterly than any Irishman I have ever

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[147] Ibid., 185.
[148] Denvir, *The Life Story*, 13.
[149] Mary J. Hickman, "Integration or Segregation? The Education of the Irish in Britain in Roman Catholic Voluntary-Aided Schools" *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 14, no. 3 (1993): 299.

known," was on occasion responsible for O'Mara's religious instruction at school.[150] As O'Mara remembers, whenever Toomey was in the classroom, "it wasn't long before religion got to race."[151] In the end, Toomey's nationalist flights of fancy landed him back in Ireland, to the relief of his older colleague, "the more prudent and diplomatic Father Ryan," but much to the chagrin of St. Vincent's congregation, which looked forward to Toomey's sermons "with intense glee."[152]

Such instances of local priests crossing their superiors over issues of Irish nationalism were not uncommon.[153] In 1899, readers of the *LCH* were treated to a gripping account of the scandalous removal of Father McCarthy from St. James' Church in nearby Pendleton. Though the Bishop of Salford would only say that McCarthy's departure from the diocese came as a result of unsatisfactory conduct, the parish priest was adamant that the reason for his removal "was none other than that of politics," specifically his refusal to participate in the celebrations of the Queen's Jubilee in 1897 and his blessing of the memorial stone to the Manchester Martyrs in Moston the following year. Distressed that McCarthy was "going around denouncing the Bishop," the *LCH* urged "certain misguided Catholics," who were supporting the embattled priest's "un-Catholic and unpriestly course of action," to "not allow national feeling to lead them into a wrong course."[154] True Catholics were thus entitled to support the

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[150] Pat O'Mara, *The Autobiography of A Liverpool Irish Slummy* (Portway, England: Cedric Chivers, 1968), 70.
[151] Ibid., 75.
[152] Ibid., 70.
[153] See Enda Delaney and Donald M MacRaild, "Irish Migration, Networks and Ethnic Identities Since 1750: An Introduction," *Immigrants & Minorities* 23, no. 2 (2005): 127-142.
[154] *LCH*, 17 February 1899.

national cause (as did the *LCH*), just as long as they subscribed to the constitutional strand of nationalism and subordinated their identification with Ireland to that of the Church.

However, despite its denationalizing educational mandate and its efforts to purge Liverpool of troublesome priests, the Catholic Church had difficulty setting the limits of the Irish nationalism of its congregation. In Liverpool's Irish working class parishes religious and national identities were imbricated. Numinous portraits of nationalists such as John Redmond, on occasion provided free of charge by the *LCH*,[155] were proudly displayed in homes alongside pictures of Pope Leo XIII, iconography that was also often made available through the Catholic Press.[156] No matter how determined some Catholic teachers and priests might have been to steer the Liverpool Irish clear of Irish history and politics, their "spiritual inheritance" passed on through family and community often "included a vivid recollection of national wrong."[157] Recalling his upbringing in late Victorian Liverpool, British trade unionist and Labour politician James Sexton insisted that the stories of 1798, the Famine, and Fenianism filled his family home, engendering in him a "bitter and boundless hatred—of everything connected with the British."[158] Even for those families that did not identify openly with Irish nationalism, the lessons learned on the streets of the northern docklands would have been hard to ignore, as sectarian

[155] *LCH*, 6 March 1903.
[156] *LCH*, 8 March 1901. See Raphael Samuel, "An Irish Religion" in *Patriots: the Making and Unmaking of British National Identity, v. II Minorities and Outsiders*, ed. Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge, 1989), 99-101; and Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 480.
[157] Samuel, "An Irish Religion," 99.
[158] Sir James Sexton, *Agitator: the Life of the Dockers' M.P, an Autobiography* (London: Faber & Faber, 1936), 18-19. Sexton grew up in St. Helen's (a county borough connected by canal to Liverpool).

conflict and competition reminded the Liverpool Irish that their overlapping religious and national identities were what separated them from the dominant Protestant culture of the city.[159]

Though the Catholic Church could not abide by sectarian violence, it gave its blessing to respectable Liverpool Irish demonstrations celebrating the union between nation and faith. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Irish National Foresters (INF) was one organization that was particularly successful at representing the national and religious interests of the Liverpool Irish.[160] Though officially non-political and non-sectarian, the INF was a friendly society that was welcoming only to those of Irish birth or descent. With the support of the Catholic Church and both moderate and militant Irish nationalists, the Foresters managed to unite an array of Liverpool Irish in support of achieving Irish self-government and protecting the religious rights of the city's Catholic minority.[161] Its influence was on display regularly on the streets of Liverpool in the form of parades that often began in the city centre and wended through the streets of north Liverpool, home to its most dedicated members. At the end of one such parade in 1900, thousands of INF supporters arrived at St. John's Church on Stanley Road to hear Father O'Byrne remind them "They were Irish Catholics, and they should never be ashamed to

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[159] Fitzpatrick, "A Curious Middle Place," 25, notes that during the Eucharistic Congress of 1908 "47 schools had to be closed for a week after the children and mothers of St. Anthony's Catholic school had exchanged blows with their Protestant counterparts at St. Polycarp's, and 'defence associations' were formed in the interests of each denomination."

[160] In 1899, the INF's 11 branches in Liverpool claimed 534 members. See *The Irish National Foresters 504 Ireland, Annual Reports, Vol V. 1899 to 1902* (Dublin: Cherry & Smallbridge Limited, Seville Place, 1899-1902), 25. Ten years later, the *LCH*, 15 May 1909, estimated that there were 1,000 Foresters in Liverpool, including members of the ladies' lodges. By this point, though, the INF was challenged by the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) as the dominant Irish-Catholic organization in the city.

[161] Ibid., 114-118.

proclaim themselves as such, and should keep that ideal before their minds." As representatives of "a race which for centuries had suffered because they would not desert Rome," Liverpool's Irish Foresters were expected to live up to both their religious and national birthright.[162]

The partnership between nationalists and the Catholic Church was celebrated with particular zeal every March at a variety of events held in honour of Ireland's patron saint. Although the Catholic Church in cooperation with British authorities had previously attempted to mute expressions of Irish nationalism on St. Patrick's Day (particularly during the Famine migration and at the height of Fenianism twenty years later),[163] by the turn of the century, priests and lay nationalists worked together to make the patrician observance in Liverpool an opportunity for the city's Irish Catholics to assert their national and religious identities. While the Church in Britain had succeeded in making St. Patrick's Day a more respectable affair than it had been in the past (and one less threatening to the Protestant host society), in the case of Liverpool, it had not, as historian David Fitzpatrick argues of Britain, transformed it into a bland "folk festival" leached of its nationalism.[164] The city's annual festivities—involving performances of Irish dance and music, an assortment of political demonstrations, a host of commemorative masses at Catholic Churches throughout the city, an INF parade, and an annual banquet attended by the clergy, nationalist politicians, and prominent Liverpool Irish families—provided a shared platform from which local and national Irish politicians, including T.P. O'Connor,

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[162] *LCH*, 23 March 1900.

[163] Mike Cronin and Daryl Adair, *The Wearing of the Green: A History of St Patrick's Day* (London: Routledge, 2002), 32-33.

[164] Fitzpatrick, "A Curious Middle Place," 32.

John Redmond, and Austin Harford, could join Church leaders in extolling the devotion of the Liverpool Irish and all "Irishmen at home or in exile" to "the twin causes of God and country." [165]

During such commemorative proceedings, political and religious leaders often invoked the Famine, either directly, as a time of incomparable "misery, starvation and death to the peasantry of Ireland," or obliquely, as part of Ireland's history of "oppression and repression."[166] While the story of the Saint was clearly the main commemorative narrative of St. Patrick's Day (detailed at great length every year in the pages of the *LCH*), during the annual festivities the Liverpool Irish were also often urged to follow the example of their Famine forefathers for their "unflinching fidelity to their faith as well as to their fatherland."[167]

In religious recollections of the Famine the Irish were ennobled for rebuffing the advances of evangelical Protestant proselytizers (or soupers), who purportedly made their offers of food to Catholics contingent on a conversion of faith.[168] At the St. Patrick's service held at St. John's Church in 1912 one local priest reminded his parishioners of "the sufferings and privations of the famine days, when the people, dying of starvation in their hovels, by the ditches and the roadside, preferred to die rather than taste the soup proffered them at the price of their holy faith."[169] Occasionally, this image of the faithful Famine Irish was projected from more highly placed pulpits. In a St. Patrick's Day

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[165] *LCH*, 15 March 1913.
[166] *LCH*, 20 March 1903; *LCH*, 15 March 1913.
[167] *LCH*, 23 March 1912.
[168] See Christine Kinealy, *This Great Calamity: The Irish Famine 1845-52* (Roberts Rinehart, Boulder, 1995), 142; and Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 297.
[169] *LCH*, 23 March 1912.

address delivered in Liverpool, Cardinal Manning ran through a litany of historical wrongs suffered by Ireland then lauded Irish Catholics for holding on to their faith "when famine and pestilence were upon them…through the cravings of nature, through the pangs of hunger and the fever of thirst, and the shivering palsey [sic] of nakedness, the cries of children, wives, and mothers."[170] Though faith tended to trump fatherland in such recollections of souperism,[171] Catholic Church leaders also relied on traditional nationalist readings of the Famine. The Famine Irish were remembered not only for rejecting relief that came with spiritual strings attached but also for demonstrating their unwillingness as a people (guided, of course, by proud and principled Irish Catholic men) to be dependent upon Protestant, British authorities. Thus, "as Crossbearers in every land," the scattered Gael were urged by religious leaders on the Day of Patrick to draw inspiration from the resilience of their Famine forebears and "renew their vows of love of Faith and Country."[172]

While St. Patrick's Day provided an annual occasion to honour the memory of the Famine Irish who had remained true to "the two great twin principles of religion and nationality" in the face of starvation and exile,[173] Catholic recollections of the Famine also focused on paying tribute to the martyrdom of the ten Catholic priests in the city who succumbed to typhus between March and September 1847 while ministering to their

[170] *LCH*, 17 March 1899.
[171] According to James S. Donnelly Jr., *The Great Irish Potato Famine* (Thrupp, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2001), 234, "Though its dimensions have often been exaggerated, some Protestant proselytism aimed at the Irish poor occurred during the famine, giving wide currency to the term 'souperism' for this use of soup and other benefits to persuade destitute Catholics to embrace Protestantism."
[172] *LCH*, 17 March 1899; *LCH*, 12 March 1910.
[173] *LCH*, 23 March 1906.

largely Irish flock.[174] The first commemoration of the martyr priests was initiated just six months after Father John Fielding Whitaker (the last of the ten Catholic clerics to perish) was buried. In February 1848, Dr. Patrick Murphy and J. Neale Lomax convened a meeting in a schoolroom at St. Mary's on Highfield Street and formed a committee that was to oversee the establishment of a church to accommodate the influx of Irish Catholics in the north end of the city and serve as a memorial to the two Benedictines from the parish of St. Mary's who died while attending to Catholic typhus victims in the area.[175] The new memorial church, St. Augustine's, located on Great Howard Street, just one kilometre north of St. Mary's, opened its doors in September 1849 and remained in operation until 1976. However, as a memorial to the martyr priests, the church did not endure very well. While St. Augustine's served a large contingent of Famine migrants and their descendants and was occasionally referred to as "the Martyrs' Church," it never established itself as a widely recognized memorial to the priests who died from typhus in 1847.[176]

By the time of the Famine jubilee there were signs of renewed interest in remembering the sacrifice of the martyr priests; however, the locus of the

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[174] Eighteen of Liverpool's twenty-four Catholic priests contracted typhus in 1847. Among the eight who recovered was Father Bernard O'Reilly, who later became the third Bishop of Liverpool. One Unitarian minister, who led a mission in Liverpool, Reverend John Johns, also died from typhus in 1847. There is a plaque that now hangs in his honour in the Ullet Road Unitarian church in Liverpool. See Boyce, "From Victorian 'Little Ireland' to Heritage Trail," 280.

[175] Thomas Burke, *Catholic History of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Tintling, 1910), 94-96; Belchem, "The Liverpool-Irish Enclave," 138; Boyce, "From Victorian 'Little Ireland' to Heritage Trail," 283.

[176] *Catholic Times*, 15 September 1899. Jim Fitzsimonds, *Saint Augustine's, Great Howard Street, Liverpool: A Brief History* (Liverpool: Starfish Multimedia, 2001), 6, estimates that "in 1848 some 16,000 people lived in the 20 streets of the future parish of St Augustine's."

commemorative interest had shifted to the site of another Catholic Church: St. Patrick's in the south central part of Liverpool, an area that had been home to a large cluster of Famine Irish but was of "mixed social and ethnic composition, including a significant Ulster Protestant presence."[177] Despite its position outside the city's north end Irish enclave, St. Patrick's had held on to its Irish Catholic parishioners and its Famine-era heritage, staging commemorative events in 1897 and 1898 that arrogated from St. Augustine's the distinction as the city's Martyr's Church.

The process of commemorating the priestly sacrifice began with "a Solemn Mass of Requiem for the 'Martyr priests'" held at St. Patrick's church on June 16, 1897, fifty years to the day after Rev. Richard Grayston, the second of St. Patrick's priests stricken with typhus, died. Monsignor James Nugent (1822–1905), who had become the most recognizable and widely revered of Liverpool's Catholic leaders in the half century since the Famine, led the memorial mass. As "a partner in their heroic sacrifice" in 1847, Nugent had intimate knowledge of the martyr priests and "the panic created by the scourge." [178] His sermon described how with "devotion and calmness" the priests offered the ultimate sacrifice: "Day and night they were with the people. Into the dwellings of the poor, in attic and cellar, in the courts and alleys, where to breathe the fetid and

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[177] Belchem, *Popular Politics, Riot and Labour*, 16.
[178] *St. Patrick's Bazaar in the Canon Goethals Memorial Schools, Liverpool, Souvenir Handbook*, 7. In addition to his involvement with the Young Men's Catholic Association, Nugent was responsible for the establishment of several charitable organizations in Liverpool, including the Sisters of Notre Dame, the Association of Providence, and the Catholic Total Abstinence League of the Cross.

pestilential atmosphere was death, they went fearlessly to give the Sacraments."[179] Nugent recounted that by the time St. Patrick's three priests had succumbed to typhus he himself was urged by a messenger to hurry to the church, which was "full of corpses" and bury the dead. [180] Nugent recalled the horrible scene he witnessed upon his arrival: "The dead and the dying lay together, and little children, soon to wither in the black death, played in the shavings on which they lay."[181] While Nugent offered a glimpse of the suffering experienced by the ordinary typhus victims, their appearance in his commemorative sermon primarily served to ennoble the memory of the priests, himself included, who dutifully put their lives on the line.

" MARTYR PRIESTS "

Figure 1.02. Etching of the ten martyr priests on display in the Crypt at Liverpool's Metropolitan Cathedral

[179] Canon Bennett, *Father Nugent of Liverpool* (St. Helen's, Lancashire: Wood, Westworth & Co., Ltd: 1949), 16. In Nugent's estimation, 25,000 people inhabited 14,000 cellars in the inner city at the height of the typhus epidemic in Liverpool.
[180] *St. Patrick's Bazaar in the Canon Goethals Memorial Schools*, 7.
[181] Ibid.

The commemorative mass at St. Patrick's helped lay the foundation for the construction the following year of a more lasting memorial to Liverpool's martyr priests: a fifteen-foot Celtic Cross with the figure of a crucified Christ. Erected at the front of the Church, facing the thoroughfare of Park Road, and below the watchful statue of St. Patrick, the Cross was inaugurated and blessed by Bishop Whiteside and Monsignor Nugent on October 2, 1898.[182] John Geraghty, an INP councillor in the nearby Merseyside borough of Bootle, member of the Liverpool branch of the nationalist Amnesty Association, and the stonemason who was also responsible for the construction of the Moston memorial to the Manchester Martyrs, was commissioned to create the £150 memorial to Liverpool's martyrs. Unlike his Celtic Cross in the Catholic cemetery in Moston, which was festooned with Irish national imagery, including the figure of Erin armed with sword and shield, an Irish round tower, a harp, and various Irish coat of arms, Geraghty's Liverpool monument, apart from the recognizably Celtic knotwork, was rather less conspicuously Irish.[183] As its dedicatory inscription stated plainly, this monument was constructed "In memory of the Liverpool Priests who, in attending the sick, caught typhus fever and died in 1847." At the base of the cross, below the figure of Jesus, Geraghty etched the priests' names, parishes, and dates of death, followed by the inscription, "The Good Shepherd giveth his life for his sheep." With no reference to the thousands of Irish Famine migrants who died from typhus upon arriving in Liverpool in 1847, or any mention of the circumstances that led them out of Ireland in the first place, the St. Patrick's memorial avoided any reappraisal of the past that might be viewed as

[182] Ibid., 5.
[183] Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse*, 117.

nationalist. As such the Celtic cross stood less as an Irish Famine monument than as a Catholic symbol of the Christ-like burden borne by Liverpool's martyr priests.

Figure 1.03. St. Patrick's 1898 Celtic Cross for Liverpool's Martyr Priests

While the Irish sheep were shorn of commemorative significance by the 1898 memorial's focus on their ten English-born shepherds, St. Patrick's Celtic Cross did serve as a reminder of what the Church viewed as the inviolable, sacred bond between priest and the Irish poor in Liverpool, a relationship that crystallized with the arrival of Famine migrants in 1847 and held fast into the new century. Over the course of two generations the Church in Liverpool had focused its mission on saving the Irish poor from depravity and damnation. In the process, it had become a thoroughly Irish institution. To serve the city's large Irish Catholic population, parishes had proliferated, particularly in the north end,[184] and priests were regularly recruited from Ireland, a practice that continued through to the mid-twentieth century.[185] By 1907, forty-two of the seventy-five Roman Catholic priests in the city were Irish born and trained; of the remaining thirty-three, the majority were "the sons and grandsons of resident Irishmen."[186] While there was anxiety expressed intermittently by Catholic authorities concerning the religiosity of the Liverpool-born offspring of Irish migrants,[187] Irish Catholics in Liverpool, whether by birth or descent, proved to be relatively habitual churchgoers.[188] At the turn of the century, Catholic Church pews in Liverpool were often full, and parishes, particularly

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[184] By 1914 there were twenty-four parishes, sixteen of them in the city's north end.
[185] Boyce, "From Victorian 'Little Ireland' to Heritage Trail," 282-286.
[186] *LCH*, 21 December 1907.
[187] *The Catholic Times*, 30 October 1891.
[188] Historians Gerard Connolly, "Irish and Catholic: Myth or Reality?: Another Sort of Irish and the Renewal of the Clerical Profession among Catholics in England," in *The Irish in the Victorian City*, eds. Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 225-254; Fitzpatrick, "A Curious Middle Place," 30; and MacRaild, *Irish Migrants in Modern Britain,* 82-84, argue that a significant proportion of Irish Catholics in Britain were non-practicing in the late nineteenth century. However, in the case of Liverpool at the turn of the century, Catholic Church attendance was on the rise, whereas the number of practicing Anglicans and non-conformists in the city was on the decline. See Bohstedt, "More than One Working Class," 208-9; and Robin Gill, *The Empty Church Revisited* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2003), 117.

those serving the 100,000, largely Irish, north end Catholics, were operating as community focal points around which religious and national identities were structured.

Catholic parishes, particularly those in the city's north end, not only claimed to offer religious sustenance to a people "starved of spiritual guidance,"[189] they also provided a form of social welfare for their parishioners, many of whom suffered from "want of work, irregular work, low wages, illness, incapacity, or death of bread-winner, early marriages, and large families.[190] While the Catholic Church certainly idealized the virtue of the Irish poor and "their cheerful resignation under all calamities,"[191] parish-based social organizations were committed to providing relief to the most impoverished.[192] Aware of "the terrible depths to which the people were sinking in poverty," priests serving north end parishes, such as Father James H. Cross of St. Alphonsus', became vocal advocates of "work for, and feeding of, the poor."[193] If local government officials and the Board of Guardians, purportedly misguided by their Protestantism, could not be relied upon to tend to "the Lord's poor"; the Catholic Church would take on the burden of keeping body and soul of its faithful together.[194] The parishes of the north end thus offered their Irish Catholic parishioners a measure of social security and a local focus for constructions of cultural and religious identity.

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[189] Daniel Murray, *The Story of Holy Cross: a Centenary Handbook, 1849-1949* (Liverpool: J & C Moores Ltd., 1949), 13.
[190] LCH, 7 March 1902.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Samuel, "An Irish Religion," 94.
[193] *LCH*, 17 February 1899.
[194] Ibid.

In the years straddling the turn of the century, several Famine parishes of the north end of Liverpool exhibited this sense of community through a series of commemorative events and processions marking their jubilee anniversaries. This new memorial practice transfigured several fifty-year old north end churches into lieux de mémoire, from which parish-based Irish Catholic identities were reaffirmed. Though these parishes were on the cusp of losing many of their longstanding parishioners to suburban estates, as crowded courts and cellars were increasingly targeted for demolition by the Insanitary Property Committee,[195] the jubilee presented an occasion for expressions of pride in an Irish Catholic community that with the aid of the church, had managed to survive the latter half of the nineteenth century.[196]

The first jubilee parish commemoration took place in June 1897 at Our Lady's on Eldon Street, a church established to cater to the large numbers of Irish Famine migrants who came to live in the area between Vauxhall and Scotland Roads. In the presence of Bishop Whiteside, Our Lady's parishioners celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the church with a mass and a procession through their neighbourhood.[197] In early December 1898, a more elaborate commemorative undertaking was held at St. Francis Xavier's Jesuit church on Salisbury Street, beginning with a Solemn Benediction and followed a week later by jubilee day. The commemorative ceremony, which was once again performed with the help of Bishop Whiteside, included sermons by Father Bernard Vaughan and Monsignor Nugent, celebrating the resiliency of the Liverpool Irish and

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[195] Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse*, 190.
[196] LCH, 7 March 1902.
[197] *Catholic Times*, 24 June 1897

their clergy through the trials of the 1840s.[198] The third parish jubilee commemoration in as many years took place in September 1899, this time at St. Augustine's, first established as the martyrs' church in memory of the Benedictine fathers of St. Mary's, serving a north end parish likened to "a small Irish village on the map of Liverpool."[199] In his sermon during the Pontifical High Mass, Bishop Whiteside recalled that the parish was overwhelmed in 1849 with 16,000 souls in its care, 12,000 more than it struggled to serve fifty years on. During the commemorative proceedings, St. Augustine's parishioners, who were predominantly poor families of Irish descent living in court houses off Great Howard Street and heavily dependent on dock labour for their livelihood, were congratulated for their commitment to the Church and their "devoted and self-sacrificing labour."[200]

This commemorative trend culminated in May 1909 when Holy Cross on Great Crosshall Street, referred to by locals as "the Famine church," brought together representatives from all of the north end parishes to celebrate its diamond jubilee.[201] According to Frank Boyce, this dockland parish, more than any other, had retained "its distinctive Irish identity," along with its fair share of social problems.[202] Sixty years after it opened as a temporary chapel to accommodate the Famine Irish who crowded the area, Holy Cross parish remained "one of the poorest in Liverpool," with "many of its

[198] *Catholic Times*, 2 December 1898.
[199] Fitzsimonds, *Saint Augustine's*, 11.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Boyce, "From Victorian 'Little Ireland' to Heritage Trail," 285. A smaller procession marking the sixtieth anniversary of another Famine parish, St. Joseph's, was held in June 1909. In 1914, St. Alban's parish held an annual outdoor procession involving Irish nationalist organisations (including the UIL and the INF) and the Catholic societies of the parish. 3,000 people participated in the procession, while another 25,000 spectators filled the streets. See *LCH*, 14 July 1914.
[202] Boyce, "From Victorian 'Little Ireland' to Heritage Trail," 289.

thoroughfares…at the best of times as gloomy and depressing as it is possible to imagine."[203] Nonetheless, the commemoration, which included a high mass and an outdoor procession and pageant, was an opportunity to celebrate the close community that had developed around the church. In preparation for the commemorative event, local residents created "hundreds of improvised shrines…in the doors and windows of the houses of the district" and transformed courts into "devotional sanctuaries"[204] Streets "which at their best are drab in their aspect, were, as if by magic, transformed into a scene of extraordinary beauty,"[205] with streamers, flags, and emblems showing both Irish and Catholic symbols, flown from houses and "displayed everywhere in astonishing profusion."[206] Experiencing many of the same difficulties faced by Famine migrants fifty years earlier, including overcrowding, disease, and poverty, Holy Cross parishioners used the opportunity presented by the diamond jubilee to draw upon their Famine heritage and proclaim an Irish Catholic identity.

The Solemn High Mass performed at Holy Cross reinforced the notion that the Famine migrants were the originators of the Catholic Church in Liverpool. In the presence of the Bishop of Liverpool, Father Terence Donnelly urged those in attendance to recall the "misery, famine, and humiliation" endured by the Irish exiles who were "flung from the land of their nativity" and "herded together under the most degrading conditions." There was, according to Donnelly, a sense of nobility in the past suffering of the Liverpool Irish, as their perseverance ensured "the progress of the faith in this city,

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[203] *LCH*, 15 May 1909.
[204] Murray, *The Story of Holy Cross*, 47-48.
[205] *LCH*, 15 May 1909.
[206] Murray, *The Story of Holy Cross*, 47.

with its some forty churches."[207] Following the mass, 4,500 processionists, including 1,000 Irish National Foresters (along with members of their "ladies' lodges" wearing green costumes and wreaths of shamrock) and hundreds of representatives from the north end parishes, marched to the corner of Standish Street and Marybone, where, according to legend, a Cross had once stood marking the spot from which St. Patrick had preached before embarking for Ireland.[208] From an open-air altar built for the occasion, Bishop Whiteside not only credited the Oblate Fathers of Ireland who came to Holy Cross during the Famine and worked "for the spiritual and temporal welfare of their people," he also echoed sentiments expressed by Father Donnelly earlier in the day, praising "the sons and daughters of Erin" who "built up the Faith in the Liverpool diocese."[209]

Though "perfect decorum marked the day's proceedings," with the exception of a an incident involving "a number of roughs who at one point threatened interference with the procession,"[210] the Holy Cross commemorative demonstration, with its flagrant display of Catholic statues, altars, flags, and shrines, was the spark in the tinder that ignited a new round of sectarian hostility.[211] According to the *LCH*, in the weeks following the 1909 commemoration, "pent-up anti-Catholic hatred and blackguardism... burst forth with renewed violence," including incidents of "Orange ruffians" attacking a priest, and several Catholic homes in the north end of the city.[212] Although a government

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[207] *LCH*, 15 May 1909.
[208] Representatives from St. Francis Xavier, St. Joseph's, St. Anthony's, Our Lady's (Eldon Street), St. Bridget's, All Souls', St. Sylvester's, St. Alban's, St. Augustine's, St. Nicholas' were in attendance.
[209] Murray, *The Story of Holy Cross*, 52.
[210] Ibid., 53.
[211] See Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse*, 192.
[212] *LCH*, 11 September 1909; *LCH*, 24 July 1909; *LCH*, 21 August 1909.

enquiry was called in 1910 to investigate this spate of violence, there was a sense among Irish Catholics that the city's non-Catholic popular press, the police authorities, and the Tory majority in city council were continuing to tolerate the Protestant evangelical firebrand, George Wise and his working class supporters, who were believed to be behind the attacks.[213] Thus the enquiry failed to resolve the sectarian animosities on display in the city's north end during the summer of 1909, which had been a part of the social lives of Protestant and Catholic working-class Liverpudlians for generations, particularly since the arrival of Famine migrants. While many Protestant Liverpudlians continued to view the commemorative processions as acts of sectarian provocation, the Famine parishioners maintained their right to assert their ethno-religious identity and communal solidarity in a city in which Irish Catholics had long been stigmatized as the Other.[214]

Famine parish commemorations presented Irish Catholics with an opportunity to validate their historical connection with the north end, a part of the city commonly condemned by much of Liverpool society as a blight on the urban scene. However impoverished and beleaguered their circumstances, parishioners used the jubilee anniversaries to express pride in parish-based communities that had been home to working class Irish Catholics for over half a century. While any reminder of the arrival of Famine migrants to Liverpool had the potential of stirring up anti-Irish resentment from sections of the host society, commemorating their Famine-era antecedents was one way for the Liverpool Irish to publicly assert their cultural identity and stake a claim in the city's memorial landscape.

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[213] *LCH*, 11 September 1909.
[214] Samuel, "An Irish Religion," 95.

OBLATE CHURCH JUBILEE.

During the celebration of the Holy Cross Mission's Diamond Jubilee at Liverpool, on Sunday, the Bishop of Liverpool, Right Rev Dr Whiteside, spoke in Standish Street on the site where St Patrick is said to have preached The photo shows his Lordship addressing the people

[Photo · Dullehan, Liverpool.

Figure 1.04. Holy Cross Mission's Diamond Jubilee Procession. Source: ***Liverpool Catholic Herald*, 15 May 1909.**

Beyond the city's Catholic parish boundaries, Irish historical representations were excluded from Liverpool's public memorial space The only prominent memorial to an Irish Catholic figure in Liverpool was constructed in honour of Monsignor Nugent [215] In December 1906, one year after his death, a twenty-foot bronze statue of Nugent posed

[215] Nugent served as Catholic Chaplain at Walton Prison and founder of the Catholic Institute in Liverpool He was also a leading Irish Catholic proponent of temperance and led a variety of assisted emigration schemes

offering a blessing to the figure of a poor boy, was erected in St. John's Gardens, one of Liverpool's most exclusive memorial spaces reserved for commemorative statues celebrating esteemed military, political, and religious men from the city's Protestant society.[216] Nugent was the one Liverpool Irish Catholic to find his monumental place in such rarified company because he was widely respected on both sides of the city's sectarian divide for devoting most of his life to improving the lot of Liverpool's most impoverished residents.

However, the presence of Nugent's statue in St. John's Gardens can also be explained by the fact that he was a controversial figure in nationalist circles. While the city's Irish Catholics generally revered Nugent for his work as one of the twenty-four priests who ministered to the typhus victims of 1847, his occasional disparagement of the Liverpool Irish, to which he once referred to as "the dregs,"[217] and his lack of interest in the cause of Irish self-government earned him the scorn of some local Home Rulers.[218] Nugent's various emigration schemes in the late nineteenth century were also ridiculed by leading nationalists in Ireland, who saw him working in the interests of landlords and the British government.[219] While not always popular with nationalists, Nugent's

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[216] Terry Cavanagh, *Public Sculpture of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996), xi. Nugent's motto, "Save the Boy," is etched on the monument's plinth. The following phrases are inscribed on its sides: "apostle of temperance; protector of the orphan child; the consoler of the prisoner; the reformer of the criminal; the saviour of fallen womanhood; the friend of all in poverty and affliction; speak a kind word; take them gently by the hand; work is the best reforming and elevating power; loyalty to country and to God."
[217] James Nugent quoted in I. C. Taylor, "Black Spot on the Mersey: A Study of Environment and Society in 18th and 19th Century Liverpool" (PhD diss., University of Liverpool, 1976), 101.
[218] Patricia Runaghan, *Father Nugent's Liverpool, 1849-1905* (Birkenhead: Countyvise Limited, 2003), 5.
[219] Bridget Connelly, *Forgetting Ireland* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2003), 112.

disavowal of Irish nationalist politics and non-sectarian approach to philanthropic work endeared him to the English Catholic hierarchy and to Liverpool's Protestant establishment. [220] Seen as a loyal subject of the crown, a faithful servant of God, and a tireless philanthropist seeking to clean up the dregs of Liverpool society, Nugent was one exceptional Irish Catholic deemed worthy of entering the pantheon of notable Liverpool men memorialized in St. John's Garden.

Figure 1.05. Bronze statue of Monsignor James Nugent erected in 1906 in Liverpool's St. John's Gardens

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[220] See *LCH*, 14 December 1906; and Joan Smith, "Class, Skill and Sectarianism in Glasgow and Liverpool," in *Class, Power and Social Structure in British Nineteenth-Century Towns*, ed. R.J. Morris (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1986), 179.

During the celebrations of Liverpool's septcentenary that took place one year after the inauguration of the Nugent memorial, Irish Catholics were reminded of their general exclusion from the city's official historical record. An elaborate pageant held in Wavertree Park in August 1907 involving historical processions and tableaux, commemorated the establishment by King John in 1207 of Liverpool as a free borough. Featuring "a cavalcade of heroic figures, splendid dresses, waving banners and gay trappings, moving, horse and foot, to the strains of noble music, in one grand array of gorgeous and harmonious colour," the pageant highlighted twelve periods from the time of "the ancient Britons" to "the age of commerce and industry." Given the celebratory nature of this spectacle, it is hardly surprising that city authorities overlooked the story of the Famine migration two generations earlier. As a memorial undertaking designed to present "the continuous story of Liverpool's growth through those seven hundred years, from a humble fishing hamlet to the mightiest seaport of the world," the historical experiences of disease, poverty, and sectarian discord—associated with the Famine migration—were left out of the commemorative narrative of progress.[221]

A separate Catholic septennial ceremony was held in the city's Pro-Cathedral on August 4, 1907, which drew attention to the arrival of Irish migrants during the Famine, the priests who "proved their love by laying down their lives for their sheep," and the poor emigrants who "remained to help in building up the greatness of Liverpool."[222] However, even when reconstructed as a story of triumph over adversity, it is telling that

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[221] *700th Anniversary of the Foundation of Liverpool—Programme of the Pageant in Wavertree Park & Grounds, August 3rd, 5th & 6th* (Liverpool: Gilbert G. Walmsley, 1907), 3.
[222] *LCH*, 9 August 1907; *LCH*, 19 July 1907.

Famine remembrance was restricted to a Catholic context on the margins of the main commemorative stage. Though the Famine, thanks in large part to its invocation in nationalist and Catholic rhetoric, continued to operate for the Liverpool Irish as a potent symbol of their resilience in the face of anti-Irish prejudice and British colonial misgovernment, few Liverpudlians outside the city's Irish Catholic community would have recollected the Famine migration along these lines. For sections of the Protestant host society, the awful visitation of 1847 was a reminder of English fortitude in enduring the city's Irish problems, and emblematic of the continued threat posed by Irish Catholics to the prosperity of Liverpool and the stability of the empire.

Remembrance in Reverse

Five years after Liverpool's septcentennial, it appeared that the nagging question of Irish self-government might finally be resolved. A third attempt was made to enact Home Rule, the issue which for a generation had dominated the political fortunes of the Liverpool Irish and in many ways shaped how the city's Protestant majority perceived them. In April 1912, Asquith's Liberal government, with the support of Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party, introduced the third Home Rule Bill. After three readings of the Bill in Parliament, the Liberals invoked the provisions of the Parliament Act to bypass the Lords and sent the Bill for Royal Assent. However, the Lords and Irish Unionists remained opposed to Home Rule, and Asquith was forced to compromise by temporarily excluding six counties in Ulster (four of which had a unionist majority) from the jurisdiction of the new Irish Parliament. During the two-year process of parliamentary

debate and negotiation over Home Rule tensions had escalated between Irish Unionists, who were determined to maintain Ulster's connection to Westminster, and Irish nationalists, who were adamantly opposed to partition. By July 1914, with the fate of Home Rule still hanging in the balance, and newly formed paramilitary organizations in Ireland supporting the Unionists (the Ulster Volunteers) and Nationalists (the Irish Volunteers) amassing arms and ammunition, it appeared that violent confrontation in Ulster was imminent.

However, just as Ireland seemed destined for civil war, the First World War suddenly began and the troubles in Flanders trumped those in Ulster.[223] With the political process of Home Rule interrupted, and its implementation postponed until after the cessation of fighting, unionists and most nationalists pledged their support to the British war effort, hoping that their respective shows of patriotism would be rewarded at war's end. [224] For John Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party, Irish voluntary engagement in the war would help secure Ireland's place within a reconfigured imperial framework. While acknowledging in a speech to Parliament at the onset of the war that "the sympathy of the Nationalists of Ireland, for reasons to be found deep down in the centuries of history, has been estranged from [England]," Redmond vowed that the Irish

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[223] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 24.

[224] The Act received Royal Assent on September 18, 1914, but with the outbreak of hostilities the implementation of the Act was suspended for one year or for the duration of what was expected to be a very short war.

would "turn with the utmost anxiety and sympathy to this country in every trial and every danger that may overtake it."[225]

Carrying Redmond's message to the Liverpool Irish and to the British and North American diaspora, T.P. O'Connor insisted that the best the expatriate Irish could do to guarantee the implementation of Irish Home Rule at this moment of "Imperial peril" was to enlist.[226] Fighting on behalf of an empire "founded on freedom, on free institutions, on the respect for nationality,"[227] and consenting "to tear temporarily from the side of Ireland some of the sons who love her best,"[228] was the greatest sacrifice that the Irish in Liverpool could make to guarantee the future security of their homeland. Referring to the plight of "a small nation like Belgium…the French and Poles under the heel of Prussia, and among twenty-one million of Slavs oppressed by Austria," O'Connor's speeches to the Irish in Liverpool in 1914 called for unconditional support for the allied cause.[229] Irish Catholics, according to O'Connor, should be eager to wage war in defence of national self-determination, a principle that all true nationalists were expected to appreciate.

The Liverpool Irish were also implored to enlist on the grounds that fighting in common cause with their British brethren would enhance their reputation and prosperity in a city in which they had long been subject to discrimination. Liverpool's Irish Nationalist Party councillors, most notably Austin Harford, believed that with an

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[225] *LCH*, 3 August 1914.
[226] *LCH*, 8 August 1914.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Ibid.
[229] *LCH*, 10 October 1914.

exemplary military record, the Irish of Liverpool would be entitled to demand full representation and rights from the city. Their sacrifices in wartime could "put an end once and for all to the hateful policy of the past in dealing with the Irish community—a policy which has been, and still is, a blot upon the municipal and social life of this city."[230] T.P. O'Connor also believed that the Irish contribution to the war effort would lead to the socio-economic advancement of the younger generation of Liverpool Irish whose parents and grandparents had been required to resort to "blind-alley occupations."[231] During the war, local nationalist leaders also sought to secure work for those not fighting on the front in "special war-time labour schemes in armaments factories and on the docks," employment that might expand the hitherto limited socio-economic horizons of the Liverpool Irish. [232]

In the estimation of the city's nationalist leaders, their constituents responded with remarkable enthusiasm to the call to arms. Relying on Austin Harford's calculations, the *Liverpool Catholic Herald* claimed that by March 1915, 7,300 men had enlisted from the seventeen Irish parishes in north Liverpool. That number doubled when taking into account all the fifty Catholic parishes in the city and its suburbs.[233] This high rate of enlistment meant that a greater number of Liverpool Irish "were in the ranks than of any other nationality in proportion to the population." The contribution from the north end Irish enclave was particularly significant, according to Harford, who claimed, "Recruiting had been so heavy in some streets in Scotland Division that almost every house had a

[230] *LCH*, 17 November 1917.
[231] *LCH*, 20 March 1915.
[232] Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse*, 249.
[233] *LCH*, 20 March 1915.

soldier from it fighting at the front."[234] Like their counterparts in Liverpool, the Irish in the rest of Britain had demonstrated an eagerness to enlist. After only eight months of fighting, T.P. O'Connor estimated that 115,000 Irish had signed up out of an Irish recruitment pool of 450,000 adult males in Britain as a whole. [235] Even when considering that many working class Irish recruits volunteered to escape a life of unremitting menial labour or to embark on a new adventure, it would be difficult to accuse the Liverpool Irish of breaching their wartime duty.

Yet despite their patriotic participation in the war, the Liverpool Irish continued to be viewed with some suspicion by the Protestant host society. Notwithstanding its high rate of recruitment, the city's 8th Irish Battalion was, according to the *LCH*, treated within the military as subordinate to the other Liverpool Battalions "because its members come chiefly from poor homes and have few well-to-do friends."[236] Anti-Irish sentiment also found expression on the home front. While the Irish in Britain during this period were generally enjoying what David Fitzpatrick describes as "a shove up the ladder of civilization,"[237] in Liverpool, even as other groups considered more alien, particularly German and Chinese immigrants, became targets of xenophobic attacks, Irish Catholics had yet to ascend far above the bottom rung.[238] They were still looked down upon by some Liverpudlians as a treacherous underclass that threatened the economic and social order of the city and the welfare of the empire. On several occasions in 1915, Irish

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[234] Ibid.
[235] *LCH*, 13 March 1915.
[236] *LCH*, 10 July 1915.
[237] Fitzpatrick, "A Curious Middle Place," 45.
[238] Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse*, 256.

migrants who passed through the port of Liverpool either as seasonal workers or as emigrants seeking passage to North America were publicly castigated as traitors. As John Belchem has noted, the choices made by these Irish transients were seen by many Protestant Liverpudlians as representative of the disloyalty, or at best the self-interest, of all Irish Liverpudlians during wartime.[239] Even though the Liverpool Irish were well represented on the battlefields of Europe and were increasingly integrated into British life, the war had failed to dislodge deep-seated notions of Irish Catholic inferiority and infidelity held by the Protestant host society.

With the outbreak of revolutionary activity in Ireland, beginning in 1916 with the Easter Rising and followed by the Anglo-Irish War and the Civil War, Irish Catholics in Liverpool were considered even more suspect. Though Liverpool's Irish National Party, under the leadership of O'Connor and Harford, was quick to denounce the Rising, and the majority of Irish in Liverpool remained committed to the war effort and the achievement of Home Rule for Ireland through constitutional negotiation, there was a small group of militant Irish nationalists in the city that redoubled efforts to end British rule in Ireland following the execution of fifteen of the leaders of the Easter Rising. Between 1916 and 1923 the Liverpool IRA was active smuggling arms to Ireland, and staging a variety of guerilla operations intended to disrupt operations at the city's port and intimidate individuals who stood in the way of achieving Irish independence. The growth in Liverpool of Sinn Fein, the Irish Self-Determination League and the Cumann na mBan between 1918 and 1922 indicates that there was some support in the city for the

[239] Ibid.

insurrectionary operations of the IRA.[240] However, by the end of the Civil War in May 1923, the separatist Republican movement in Liverpool was faltering, as the majority of Liverpool Irish were more focused on issues of immediate consequence in their daily lives than on militant Irish nationalism.

Though the Irish National Party proved in the postwar election that it still had a base of support, the era of Nat-Labism under T.P. O'Connor and Austin Harford in Liverpool was coming to an end. As the Irish question seemed settled with the establishment of the Irish Free State, it was becoming increasingly difficult for the leaders of the INP to justify the existence of an Irish nationalist party in Liverpool. For the *LCH*, long an advocate of the INP, the time had come to abandon the politics of ethnicity and encourage the Liverpool Irish to merge with the political mainstream.[241] The INP soon after transformed itself into the Centre party, a Catholic party that initially had some success in municipal elections but soon lost its influence to Labour. By the end of the 1920s, the political realignment of the city's Irish Catholics—a process that began during the war as Irish nationalism lost its foothold in Liverpool's political landscape—was more or less complete. As a dominant force within the city's Labour party, the Irish, now more readily identifying themselves as Catholic Liverpudlians, used their influence to promote social and political issues of relevance to their religion rather than their nationality.

With the gradual demise of Irish nationalist politics in Liverpool, Irish Catholics in the city were less compelled to call upon the Famine. The disinclination to dwell on its

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[240] Ibid., 281.
[241] *LCH*, 11 February 1922.

memory was already apparent in the political rhetoric of the Liverpool Irish before the outbreak of war. As early as 1913, when it appeared that Home Rule would soon be a reality, T.P. O'Connor had "dropped his plaint of sorrows" for "a trumpet blast of hope."[242] Irish constitutional nationalists in Liverpool were disposed to put aside past differences and historical grievances, as Home Rule was expected to be "a victory...for the British Empire, to whose unity and security and whose honour and glory it would add much."[243] While O'Connor, by 1918, was no longer insisting that the war was "the supreme moment of jubilation by the Irish race," as he had four years earlier,[244] he congratulated the Irish and their party for "not allowing their historical wrongs to prejudice them" when "they realized that on this occasion England was right."[245] Even after the Civil War, when the INP's star had faded significantly and O'Connor was attempting to convince his constituents that "The Irish must look after their own," and that an Irish nationalist party in the city was still "necessary for the maintenance of racial identity," he chose not to call upon bitter memory of the Famine, recognizing that the Liverpool Irish were no longer as responsive to its legacy. Thus, in O'Connorite rhetoric the Famine became "the days when they came to Great Britain under circumstances of hardship." [246] While not completely stripped of its emotional resonance,[247] 1847 had lost

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[242] *LCH*, 6 June 1914.
[243] *LCH*, 22 March 1913.
[244] *LCH*, 6 June 1914.
[245] *LCH* 10 August 1918.
[246] *LCH*, 26 May 1923.
[247] *LCH*, 7 March 1914. The *LCH* reminded its readers of the sixty-seventh anniversary of the death of Father Peter Nightingale, "the first of the twelve heroic Liverpool priests who sacrificed their lives that they might bring the consolations of religion to the stricken Irish immigrants during the famine fever epidemic of 1847."

much of its utility as a rallying cry for Irish political solidarity and self-reliance in Liverpool.

The Famine was also rarely recalled in Catholic rhetoric during the interwar period, as the city's Church severed its residual connections with Irish nationalism and asserted its dominance as the institution with which most Irish Liverpudlians identified.[248] At a parish level, there was the occasional recollection of "The Irish exiles who fled from a stricken land in the Black Forties," and the heroic ministrations of Liverpool's "stricken priests," to their "shattered flock," as was the case during the 1923 fundraising drive to build elementary schools for 1,000 children in the parish of St. Patrick's Church.[249] However, the Famine parishes of the north end were not celebrated and commemorated as the loci of Irish Catholic communities as they had been with such brio at the turn of the century.

The city's traditional Irish parishes were transformed during the interwar years, as slums were demolished and long-term residents relocated to new council estates on the outskirts of the city.[250] This pattern of resettlement was already evident in the early 1920s as the more gainfully employed residents of the north end left for the suburbs.[251] By the late 1930s, many of the unskilled and casual labourers who had remained in the northern

[248] The *LCH*, 4 February 1933, criticized nationalists who continued to manipulate Irish memory for their own political ends: "All sorts of evils have been erected on the basis of Ireland's sorrows and trials and sufferings, of which the baser sort of Irishman has ever taken advantage."
[249] *St. Patrick's Bazaar in the Canon Goethals Memorial Schools, Liverpool, Souvenir Handbook*, 8-11.
[250] Frank Boyce, "Catholicism in Liverpool's Docklands: 1950s-1990s," in *Catholics in England, 1950-2000: Historical and Sociological Perspectives*, ed. Michael P. Hornsby-Smith (London: Cassell, 1999), 46-47.
[251] Boyce, "From Victorian 'Little Ireland' to Heritage Trail," 288. A group of parishioners from St. Francis Xavier who moved to relatively upscale council estates in Larkhill, Edge Lane Drive, and Springwood, were part of this first stage of migration from Liverpool's Irish enclave.

docklands in order to be close to work had been pushed out of their homes and into overpriced and poorly built council flats and houses. This was the case for parishioners of St. Augustine's whose slums were demolished in 1938 to make way for an area zoned for industry.[252] Yet there was some local resistance to urban renewal, a process seen by many as destructive to the city's traditional Irish Catholic communities. In Holy Cross parish, Father James O'Shea solicited support from Catholic city councillors, which resulted in the 1935 construction of a tenement block (the Fontenoy Gardens) within the parish boundaries (courtesy of the Greenwood Act of 1930) that accommodated sixty-three families whose dwellings had been demolished and whose employment was locally based.[253] However, by this point the inexorable exodus to the estates was already underway. By 1938, half of the Church's almost 5,000 parishioners had relocated to the suburbs.[254] Although the sixteen north end parishes that were the centre of Liverpool's Irish enclave still had a population of 100,000 by the end of the decade, the traditional parish communities had experienced profound structural changes. In this context, it is hardly surprising that the city's traditional Irish parishes had lost the impetus to commemorate their genesis during the Famine years.

As the north end famine parishes struggled to cope with the displacement of their congregations, Catholic authorities were preoccupied with the construction of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King—a new, towering symbol of Catholic growth and power in Liverpool. The massive Byzantine Cathedral, designed in 1930 by Sir

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[252] Fitzsimonds, *Saint Augustine's*, 13.
[253] Daniel Murray, *The Story of Holy Cross*, 63.
[254] Boyce, "From Victorian 'Little Ireland' to Heritage Trail," 289.

Edwin Lutyens, was to be built on Brownlow Hill, the site of Liverpool's former workhouse and first fever ward, expanded in March 1847 to accommodate typhus victims. Planned as the second largest church in the world (after St. Peter's Basilica in Rome), the city's new Catholic Cathedral was intended to overshadow its Anglican counterpart. Construction began in June 1933 after several years of fundraising; however, the project, which had raised the ire of many Protestant city councillors, soon collapsed under financial strains.[255] Though ultimately unsuccessful, the Cathedral project illustrates how determined Liverpool's Catholics (comprising one-third of the city's population) were to assert themselves as a dominant constituency, one that had outgrown its historically subordinate position in the city's power structure. While the Cathedral's inauguration in January 1933 gave Bishop Richard Downey occasion to reprise a hackneyed Catholic interpretation of the Famine, praising the thousands of Irish migrants to Liverpool who died having forsaken the food that was offered them in exchange for their faith,[256] the Cathedral's planned construction represented the point at which the grief and grievances of the Famine could finally be overcome. Designed to stand atop Brownlow Hill, a site of "sorrow, exile and loneliness,"[257] this commanding monument to Catholicism was intended to demonstrate how far the faithful in Liverpool and England

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[255] Thirty years later, a very different looking Catholic Cathedral—nicknamed "Paddy's wigwam" for its Irish congregants and its conical shape—was built on Brownlow Hill.
[256] *The Times*, 5 January 1933.
[257] Archdiocese of Liverpool, *Official Programme: Great Cathedral Demonstration in Aid of the Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral, Thingwall Park*, 31 August 1930, 5.

had integrated into mainstream society, risen above past difficulties, and fulfilled their religious destiny.[258]

Yet, regardless of how much the Liverpool Irish self-identified as Catholic Britons and distanced themselves from the negative racial and religious associations that had trailed them for close to a century since the Famine, the local Protestant establishment was intent on reprising representations of the city's Irish population designed to remind them of their ethnic difference and outsider status. Throughout the interwar period, and particularly during the 1930s as the economic depression deepened, the Irish were identified as the source of the city's economic and social problems. This animus was reflected in municipal politics, which remained divided along ethno-religious lines. The Irish Catholic caucus that had come to dominate Labour challenged the hegemony of a Conservative caucus anxious to reassert Protestant authority in the city.[259] Tory politicians and civil servants, along with various Protestant clerics and journalists, responded with anti-Irish rhetoric, much of it based on essentialist categories and pseudo-scientific findings vilifying the Irish as an alien presence that had imposed itself on the city since the Famine.

The increased traffic of Irish migrants through Liverpool during the economically depressed interwar years was a particularly disturbing development for the city's Protestant establishment, leading to comparisons to the Famine years when the Irish arrived en masse to congest and contaminate the port city. While such comparisons were

[258] *LCH*, 24 March 1934.
[259] The city's Anglican Bishop, Albert David, *Liverpool Diocesan Review* (23 April 1936): 114-116, shared the Tory fear that "Irish influence upon social and political life" would lead to the city being "dominated by Roman Catholics."

odious, as the Famine Irish faced unparalleled adversity, their compatriots who came to Liverpool in the 1920s and 1930s, many of them small farmers from the west and midlands, were desperate for work. With the tightening of American restrictions on Irish immigration in the early 1920s, Britain replaced the United States as the most common destination for the Irish in search of brighter economic prospects, a trend that continued throughout the twentieth century.[260] Merseyside received an annual average of 5,300 Irish migrants between 1924 and 1937, almost half of the total average annual inflow of Irish who entered England and Wales during this period.[261] Taken alone, however, these figures can be misleading. By the early 1930s, as Liverpool experienced chronic unemployment, many Irish migrants returned home. A far greater number left the city for work in cities in the midlands and southeast of England, where there was an increasing demand for workers in light manufacturing industries.[262] The fact that the vast majority of Irish migrants chose not to settle in Liverpool is confirmed by census results which show that the number of Irish-born in the city between 1921 and 1931 had increased by only 1,800, from 28,700 to 30,500.[263] Nonetheless, Irish-born Liverpudlians, and by

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[260] Matthew O'Brien, "Irishness in Great Britain and the United States: Transatlantic and Cross-Channel Migration Networks and Irish Ethnicity, 1920-1990" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 2001), 71, 85.
[261] R.S. Walshaw, *Migration to and from the British Isles: Problems and Policies* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1941), 72.
[262] O'Brien, "Irishness in Great Britain and the United States," 69, 86.
[263] Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism*, 463.

association all native-born Irish Liverpudlians,[264] were blamed for many of Liverpool's woes—real and imagined—during the interwar period.[265]

Throughout the 1930s, leading Protestant commentators demanded that steps be taken to prevent Irish migrants from continuing to exploit their unfettered access to Liverpool and the rest of Britain, to which they were entitled as citizens of the Free State who remained British subjects. While it is hardly surprising that militant Protestants like H.D. Longbottom, protege of anti-Catholic preacher George Wise, and leader of the Protestant party, sought to keep out Irish Catholic newcomers he deemed disloyal,[266] it is noteworthy that members of the Anglican Church were also quick to raise the alarm about the deleterious effect that this most recent wave of Irish immigration was having on their city. Citing inflated numbers of steerage passengers entering Liverpool in 1930, Anglican minister, Charles Raven prevailed upon *the Liverpool Review* to demand an end to "unrestricted immigration."[267] Raven's superior, Bishop Albert David, used his own diocesan publication to express contempt for "the generous migration policy of the British government" and outrage that England was forced to support Ireland's excess population.[268]

In order to convey the gravity and longevity of Liverpool's Irish problem, commentators referred back to "the great influx following the famine in the forties of the

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[264] David, *Liverpool Diocesan Review*, 114, estimated that there were as many as "a quarter of a million Irish in Liverpool."
[265] *The* Times, 5 August 1936. According to the 1931 Census, Irish-born Liverpudlians represented 37 percent of all foreign-born residents in the city.
[266] *The Times*, 7 September 1933.
[267] Charles E. Raven, "Irish Immigration into Merseyside," *Liverpool Review* 6, no. 8 (August 1931): 268-270, claimed that 25,000 steerage passengers arrived in the port in 1930.
[268] David, *Liverpool Diocesan Review*, 114.

last century"[269] and the "almost continuous stream of migration into this district from all parts of Ireland" since 1847.[270] Like the Famine forerunners, Irish migrants ninety years on were often labelled as a racially inferior and dangerous underclass—the socio-economic scum collecting at the bottom of Liverpool society. Under the guise of objective, dispassionate, rational social science, Caradog Jones argued that the substandard physique, mental acuity, and character of the Irish was sufficient reason "to restrict the entry of labour of inferior quality through the Port of Liverpool."[271] In a piece exploring the Irish Immigration question, *The Liverpool Review* also adopted the language of eugenics, claiming that "the greatest feature of...[Liverpool's] alien menace lies in immigration into Britain during the last hundred years of Irish Mediterranean stock."[272] While this is a particularly inflammatory example of 1930s anti-Irish rhetoric, it illustrates the extent to which the Irish were considered an unwelcome, inassimilable presence in Liverpool, in much the same way they had been in the mid-nineteenth century.

With global trade stagnating and domestic economic activity shifting towards the southeast, and Liverpool's unemployment rate remaining above eighteen percent throughout the 1930s (twice the national rate), the local Protestant establishment found its scapegoat in the newcomers from the Free State.[273] Even though most Irish migrants in

[269] D. Caradog Jones, *A Study of Migration to Merseyside with Special Reference to Irish Immigration* (Liverpool: University Press of Liverpool, 1934), 9.
[270] *The* Times, 5 August 1936.
[271] Jones, *A Study of Migration to Merseyside*, 9.
[272] *Liverpool Review*, January 1934.
[273] Ronaldo Munck, *Reinventing the City: Liverpool in Comparative Perspective* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), 58.

the 1930s left Liverpool for employment opportunities elsewhere, the Liverpool Irish were cast, much as they had been in 1847, as child-like dependents draining the system of relief and impeding the city's "social progress."[274] Protestant political and religious leaders proposed several schemes to limit Irish claims on public assistance: requiring a five-year period of residency before eligibility for relief be granted; taking legislative action "to ensure that the Government of Éire accepts financial responsibility for its nationals who become chargeable to local and national public funds;"[275] and issuing identification cards as a means of "identifying the undesirable characters who have managed to come from Ireland."[276]

Such schemes were born of the popular belief that not only were the Irish exhausting, and in some instances bilking, the city's relief system, they were also stealing jobs from Liverpool's "native population."[277] The Irish Immigration Investigation Bureau, a purportedly "non-sectarian and non-political" voluntary body, opened in February 1939 to investigate this perceived crisis, concluding that "imported Irish labour" was "given preference over local labour… preventing local unemployed men from leaving the live register of unemployed."[278] The suspicion was that Irish foremen and gangers on the docks in the building trades were using their influence to "secure work for

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[274] Compare *The Times*, 25 January 1847 and Canon Charles E. Raven, "The Irish Problem," *Liverpool Review* 6, no. 5 (May 1931): 166.
[275] David Rowan and Mrs. M.A. Cumella, J.P., "The Influx of Irish into Liverpool: The Investigation Bureau, What it is and What it is doing," *The Liverpolitan* 3, no. 5 (May 1939): 19.
[276] Mr. Maxwell Fyfe, MP, quoted in Rowan and Cumella, "The Influx of Irish into Liverpool," 31.
[277] Raven, "Irish Immigration into Merseyside," 270.
[278] Rowan and Cumella, "The Influx of Irish into Liverpool," 19. The Bureau went on to enlist the support of local Tory Members of Parliament to petition the House of Commons for the restriction of Irish immigration.

newly-arrived Irishmen in preference to resident English.[279] Having flooded the already teeming reservoir of casual labour at the docks,[280] the Irish were singled out for doing "grave injury…to the prosperity of Merseyside and to its population."[281]

As in the mid-nineteenth century and again in the late-Victorian period, the Irish living in the northern docklands became the focus of social investigators and journalists intent on exposing the city's ongoing Irish slum problem.[282] In this reprise of anti-Irish rhetoric, the newcomers from Ireland—"whose wretched conditions of living [had] for two generations engaged the attention of the municipal authorities"—were identified as the primary source of the city's squalor and depravity.[283] Still home to "a very large Irish population…crowded in houses of the most wretched type," Liverpool was typecast as a city plagued by poverty since "the landing [in 1847] of nearly 300,000 Irish immigrants."[284] The repeated failure of various urban redevelopment schemes introduced by Liverpool City Council since 1865,[285] led Caradog Jones to conclude that the Irish were a people predisposed to "overcrowding and poverty."[286] There was a growing consensus that the only way of cleaning up the slums was to prevent the Irish from settling in the city; otherwise, even if re-housing schemes were implemented, the newly

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[279] Raven, "Irish Immigration into Merseyside," 269.
[280] Rt. Rev. A.A. David, "Liverpool as it should be" in *The Book of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool Organization Limited, 1928), 17.
[281] Raven, "Irish Immigration into Merseyside," 268.
[282] *Squalid Liverpool*, 77. According to the authors of *Squalid Liverpool,* which included a city councillor, a local doctor, and a member of the Daily Post staff, "The wretches you see in Scotland-road inherit probably the proclivities of a dozen generations of degradation…driven by hunger from the sterile heaths and mountain sides, to find and to intensify in our great cities a squalor worse than they originally experienced."
[283] *The Times*, 8 November 1927.
[284] *The Times*, 23 August 1933.
[285] Ibid.
[286] Jones, *A Study of Migration to Merseyside*, 8.

arrived Irish would soon occupy residences recently vacated by their Liverpool-born compatriots.[287] Some militants, like H.D. Longbottom, remained convinced of the futility of "curing the slum problem," so long as "people whose loyalties were elsewhere" were allowed to enter the city.[288] These characterizations of the Irish as a perpetual urban blight took root in Liverpool over the course of the 1930s, gaining even greater purchase in 1939 with Ireland's declaration of neutrality and the initiation of an IRA bombing campaign targeting civic buildings, transportation links, and cinemas in the city.[289]

Conclusion

While the anti-Irish sentiment of the 1930s meant that the Famine migration had gradually lost much of its potency for the Liverpool Irish as a symbol of Irish suffering and identity, this certainly was not the case during the period of Home Rule agitation when the Famine proved to be a versatile and instrumental Irish memory in Liverpool. Between the Famine jubilee in 1897 and the First World War, the catastrophe was offered up to the Liverpool Irish in nationalist and Catholic narratives of remembrance. Irish constitutional nationalists in the city often found occasion to recall the Famine as evidence of British colonial misgovernment in Ireland and the ongoing prejudicial treatment of the Irish in Liverpool, as a way of cultivating and asserting a sense of

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[287] Raven, "The Irish Problem," 167.
[288] *The Times*, 7 September 1933.
[289] In March 1939, the Economic League (a group of industrialists examining the problem of unemployment in Liverpool) concluded that the Irish "prefer remaining [in Liverpool] on the dole…and bringing their relatives over from Ireland to share their good fortune at the expense of the British taxpayers and ratepayers." *Liverpool Daily Post*, 2 March 1939. Two months later, the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce also condemned the Irish for falling "back on the English dole, having first deprived English labour of employment." *The Liverpool Trade Review* (May 1939): 117.

solidarity and identity in a city structured along sectarian lines, as an invitation to non-Irish Liverpudlians to join the struggle for Home Rule, and as a point of cultural connection between the Irish in Liverpool and those who settled in the North American diaspora. While emphasizing the primacy of Catholicism within the Liverpool Irish community, parish-based remembrances of the catastrophe celebrated the inextricable relationship between Irish nationality and faith. The Famine was thus constructed as the seminal historical moment when Irish exiles were united in defence of country and creed. Through recollections of the mid-nineteenth century exodus, Irish political and religious leaders in Liverpool reinforced consciousness of a collective identity among the Liverpool Irish, one that made sense of their beleaguered place in their adoptive city, while reconnecting them to an imagined Irish homeland and forging transnational links with other Irish groups throughout the diaspora.

However, by the time the Irish Free State was established, Irish Catholics had become less inclined to identify and assert themselves through nationalist and religious reconstructions of the Famine. Preoccupied with their own socio-economic plight, particularly in the impoverished northern docklands, and increasingly reluctant to draw attention to their historically subordinate position in the city's power structure, the Liverpool Irish were seeing diminishing returns on Famine reminiscences. However, just as the city's Irish Catholics began to distance themselves from the legacy of the mid-nineteenth century migration, Liverpool's Protestant establishment saw fit to narrate the catastrophe back to the Irish, reminding them of the terrible burden they had been, and continued to be, on the city. This was Famine remembrance by recrimination. Once a

politically expedient historical memory for the city's Irish community, mobilized in support of Home Rule and Catholic solidarity, Famine remembrance was appropriated to activate the anti-Irish prejudices of sections of the Protestant host society. As the flow of Irish migrants into Liverpool increased during the economically depressed interwar years, various Protestant politicians, clerics, journalists, and social investigators identified the Liverpool Irish as a slum-dwelling, dole-collecting group of interlopers and the city's perpetual problem. Irish interwar immigration was thus presented as part of the historical continuum of unwelcome Irish migration to Liverpool that stretched back to the Famine. Traditionally a memory called upon by Irish Catholics to delineate an identity that differentiated their embattled community from the host society, by the interwar years, the city's still hostile Protestant establishment constructed its own Famine narratives to remind the Irish that Liverpool was not yet their home.

Chapter Two

Upon this "Primitive Rock"

This stone will tell through many a year,
They died on our shores, and they slumber here.

—Rosanna Eleanor Leprohon,
"The Emigrants' Monument at Point St. Charles"[1]

Whereas Liverpool functioned as a gateway for Irish immigrants and nationalist politics for much of the century following the Famine, Montreal was an increasingly uncommon destination for Irish immigrants and an intermittent host to the brand of political agitation and sectarian aggression familiar to Liverpudlians. Yet, despite Montreal's relative remoteness from the people and politics of Ireland, Irish Catholics in the city were active in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries maintaining connections to their Irish origins. More than any other historical episode, it was the traumatic story of the 1847 migration, which delivered 70,000 Famine refugees and a typhus epidemic to the city's waterfront, that Montrealers most often revisited to narrate their Irishness. Through various commemorative events and activities organized between the Famine jubilee and its centenary, Irish Catholic groups, not unlike their counterparts in Liverpool, looked back to 1847 as the defining moment in the development of the city's Irish community

[1] Rosanna Eleanor Leprohon, *The Poetical Works of Mrs. Leprohon (Miss R.E. Mullins)* (Montreal: J. Lovell, 1881), 82-83.

that affirmed their place in the diaspora and opened a path to Irish identity and belonging in their city.

The commemorative repertoire of the Montreal Irish was, however, distinct from that of their Merseyside compatriots, as most acts of Famine remembrance were organized at a monument that was claimed over time as the city's Famine memorial. Despite its enduring unpopularity as a commemorative object, the Ship Fever Monument—a boulder installed in 1859 to mark the site of the reputed 1847 burial grounds adjacent to the fever sheds in Pointe Saint-Charles—came to function as the city's focal point for Famine remembrance.[2] Inaugurated by representatives of the Anglo-Protestant elite and a group of workers involved in the construction of the Victoria Bridge, the monument's original intent was to preserve from desecration the final resting place of all immigrants who died during the typhus epidemic of 1847. Only through a gradual process that was often contentious, and at one point litigious, did it come to be widely recognized as a memorial to victims of the Famine migration. Analyzing commemorative events organized at the Ship Fever Monument in 1897, 1913, and 1942, this chapter traces how groups of Irish Catholics laid claim to the boulder as Montreal's Famine memorial.

More specifically, I examine how collective acts of remembrance at the memorial site served as a staging ground for the negotiation and construction of Irish Catholic identities in Montreal in changing socio-political contexts from the late nineteenth century into the mid-twentieth century. While there was generally a shared sense of

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[2] The Ship Fever Monument has had many monikers over the years, including the Immigrant Stone, the Typhus Stone, the Irish Stone, and most recently the Black Stone or Black Rock.

purpose among Irish Catholics to honour the memory of Famine migrants who succumbed to typhus in 1847 and to safeguard their gravesite, particularly at moments when it was seen to be neglected by its Anglican caretakers or violated by industrial operations in Pointe Saint-Charles, the commemorative events organized at the Ship Fever Monument uncovered a range of historical memories and exposed a variety of often competing political agendas. In their struggle to preserve the memorial site and in their search for meaningful commemorative rituals and rhetoric in the fifteen years following the Famine jubilee, Irish Catholics were often confronted with differences of class, ideology, and opinion within the Irish community itself. They were also regularly reminded of the relatively disadvantaged economic and political position that they, as a group, continued to occupy in the city, reflected in the near absence of Irish Catholic symbolic space in Montreal's crowded memorial landscape. However, as the Famine centenary neared, an increasing number of Irish Catholics, generations removed from Ireland and well integrated into Canadian society, were enjoying a greater degree of affluence and influence in Montreal. In this context, the embattled undertones and nationalist tenor that resonated in Famine commemorations prior to the First World War were less voluble. While the arrival of close to 100,000 Irish migrants to British North America in 1847 (two-thirds of whom filtered through Montreal) persisted in public memory as the central event in the history of the Irish in Montreal and Canada, commemoration of the catastrophe now focused more on celebrating Irish Catholics' resilience in times of adversity and their pioneering contributions to their adoptive city and nation.

"A Frightful Scourge"[3]

While many Irish Famine migrants to British North America eventually moved on to the United States,[4] they left a lasting impression on a number of Canadian port cities, none more so than Montreal—Canada's principal port of disembarkation, which was beset by a typhus epidemic in the summer of 1847.[5] Between June and November, the city's 50,000 residents had to contend with the arrival of approximately 70,000 Irish, who came by steamers sent up the St. Lawrence from the quarantine station on Grosse-Île.[6] The first signs of illness in the city appeared on June 5th, when *The Pilot and Journal of Commerce* reported that an eight-year-old girl "attacked with excruciating head pains" fell into "violent convulsions" on the wharf, which a local doctor dismissed as a case of "coup de soleil" and "no reason to be alarmed."[7] However, with the landing two days later of 2,304 Famine migrants at Windmill Point there was no mistaking that typhus, or "ship fever" as

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[3] Lord Elgin, in a letter to Earl Grey, described the arrival of Famine migrants as "a frightful scourge to the province. Thousands upon thousands of poor wretches are coming here incapable of work, and scattering the seeds of disease and death." See Theodore Walrond, C.B. ed., *Letters and Journals of James, Eighth Earl of Elgin, 1811-1863* (London: J. Murray, 1872), http://infomotions.com/etexts/gutenberg/dirs/1/0/6/1/10610/10610.htm (accessed 2 Feb 2010).
[4] Donald H. Akenson, *Small Differences: Irish Protestants and Irish Catholics, 1815-1922* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 86.
[5] For an overview of where and in what numbers Irish Catholics arrived in British North America during the summer of 1847 see Scott W. See, "'An Unprecedented Influx': Nativism and Irish Famine Immigration to Canada," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 30, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 429-53.
[6] James M. O'Leary, *The Catholic Record*, 16 April 1892, cites a letter he received from the steam service operator, John Wilson, in which Wilson claims that 80,000 Irish newcomers were conveyed in three steamers (*the Quebec*, *the Queen* and *the Alliance*) from Grosse-Île to Pointe Saint-Charles in Montreal during the summer and fall of 1847. However, given that at least 10,000 of the 80,000 Irish migrants who set sail for the port of Quebec perished en route, in quarantine on Grosse-Île, or in Quebec City, the number of Irish who arrived in Montreal in 1847 is likely closer to 70,000.
[7] *The Pilot and Journal of Commerce*, 5 June 1847.

it was then known, had arrived in Montreal.[8] By the second week of June, the city was "inundated with thousands of the most debilitated and wretched beings, ever thrown upon [its] shores mostly in a sickly, and many in a dying state."[9]

Many of those healthy enough to continue on their journey to destinations in the United States or Canada West had to wait at Montreal's wharves for transportation—a "cruel and unnecessary delay" that "expose[d] the emigrants to increased danger of disease and the City to perils."[10] The unfortunate immigrants showing signs of typhus were taken to the site of two lazarettos and three sheds on the south bank of the Lachine Canal near Wellington Street,[11] where one journalist observed "all the marks of wretchedness and misery in their most revolting forms...to say nothing of the noxious vapour."[12] Facilities at the site were insufficient to accommodate the thousands of sick and dying, even after they were expanded to include an additional six buildings. Consequently, by early July, a growing number of Irish immigrants desperate for food and lodgings were venturing from the waterfront into "all parts of the city and suburbs," exposing residents to the epidemic that city authorities were struggling to contain.[13]

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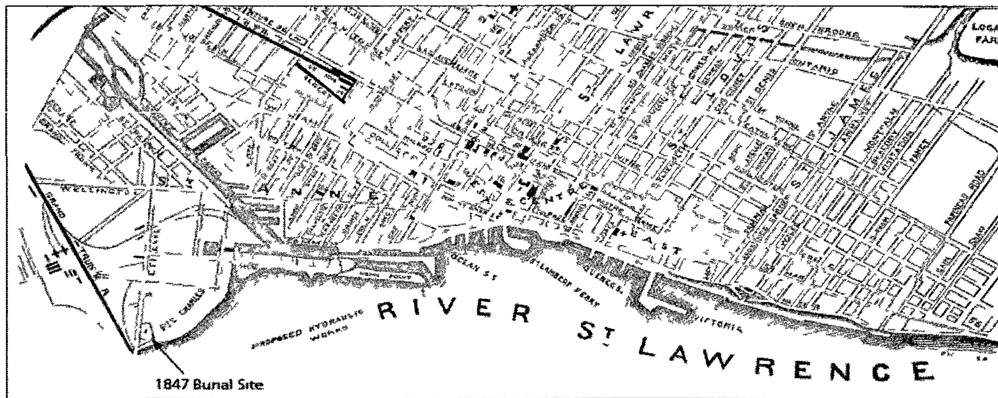
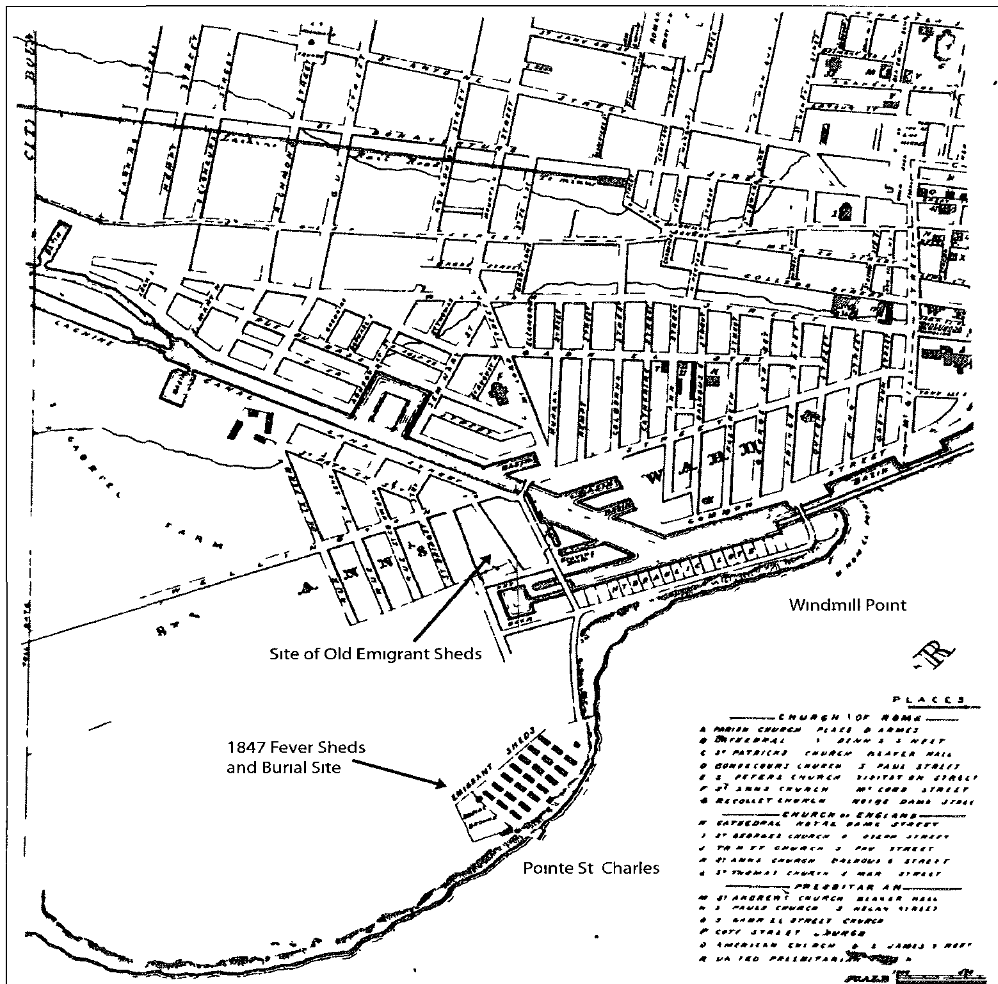
[8] Alan Hustak, *Saint Patrick's of Montreal: the Biography of a Basilica* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1998), 36.
[9] *Report of the Board of Health for the City of Montreal, 12 August 1847*, 1847 Immigration file, City of Montreal Archives, Fonds de la Ville de Montréal, Montreal, QC.
[10] Ibid.
[11] A lazaretto is a hospital designed for the treatment and often quarantine of patients suffering from infectious diseases.
[12] *Pilot and Journal of Commerce*, 12 June 1847.
[13] *Report of the Board of Health for the City of Montreal, 12 August 1847*, 2.



Map 2.01. City of Montreal, 19th century, Print by John Henry Walker. Source: McCord Museum of Canadian History, M930.50.1.73.



Map 2.02. Central and southwest Montreal in 1852. Source: H. Ramesay, "Map of the City of Montreal Showing the Burnt district, July 1852," Bibliothèque Nationale du Québec, Montréal, G3454M6-1852-Alb.

Map 2.03. Victoria Bridge and Fever Sheds in 1859.
Source: McCord Museum of Canadian History

Map 2.04. Pointe Saint-Charles in 1859. Source: McCord Museum of Canadian History

Fearful of "the conversion of a populous city...into a virtual Quarantine Station," citizen groups and the Board of Health demanded that all incoming immigrants be quarantined outside city limits on one of the Boucherville islands.[14] However, the city's Joint Emigrant Commissioners and Montreal's Mayor, John Easton Mills (who would later fall victim to typhus himself) decided that the best way to manage the crisis was to construct an additional twenty-two sheds on land near the riverbank in Pointe Saint-Charles, just one kilometre southeast of the original sheds.[15] By early August, as steamers from Grosse-Île continued to deposit tens of thousands of Irish on the city's waterfront, the new facilities had done little to alleviate suffering or contain the contagion, as thousands already suffering from the disease were overcrowded in unsanitary conditions. Despite the efforts of many Montrealers who put their lives at risk tending to those languishing in the fever sheds—including the fourteen nuns, eight Catholic priests, one Anglican clergyman, and four employees of the Emigration Department who succumbed to typhus—the death toll soared.[16] The plain deal coffins that were stacked next to the sheds and replenished daily did little to dignify the ugly end for the Irish who were dying in such numbers that they were "buried like dogs in the Hospital pit."[17] It was not until October 1847 that the epidemic finally abated, by which time the "horrors of Grosse Isle had their counterpart" in Pointe Saint-Charles.[18] As many as 6,000 people had died, the

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[14] *Pilot and Journal of Commerce*, 19 August 1847.
[15] Francis Badgley, "Irish Emigrant Fever," *British American Journal of Medical and Physical Science* (February 1848): 260-2.
[16] Estelle Mitchell, *Mère Jane Slocombe, Neuvième Supérieure Générale des Soeurs Grises de Montréal, 1819-1872* (Montreal: Fides, 1964), 91-2.
[17] "Montreal History & Gazetteer" J.-D. Borthwick, 1891, folio 85" (City of Montreal Archives); *The Pilot and Journal of Commerce* 10 July 1847.
[18] John Francis Maguire, *The Irish in America* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1868), 145.

vast majority of them Irish Catholic Famine migrants who were hastily buried in mass graves in the vicinity of the fever sheds in Pointe Saint-Charles.[19]

The Promise of Permanence

Though many of the Famine migrants who remained in Montreal lived and worked in close proximity to the burial site, in the industrial milieu of Pointe Saint-Charles and across the Lachine canal in Griffintown, there was no immediate effort made to create a memorial to their compatriots who died in 1847. It was not until 1854 when construction of the Victoria Bridge commenced that the burial site began to attract commemorative attention. Over the next five years, thousands of labourers, including many unskilled Irish Catholics, found themselves working at the northern end of the bridge at the very spot where the typhus victims were buried in 1847. As many as five hundred English and Irish workers even took up residence next to the mass graves in the fever sheds which Peto, Brassey and Betts, the British firm responsible for building the bridge, had converted into housing. If these formerly febrile environs were not unsettling enough, the presence of "a small mound and a cross" outside their doors would have served as a further reminder that they lived and worked at a "sacred spot."[20] As they hurried to complete construction of the bridge in the autumn of 1859, workers were purportedly so concerned that "the

[19] For a close analysis of Montreal's typhus mortality rates in 1847 see A.B. McCullough, "The Black Stone Monument and the Montréal Typhus Epidemic of 1847," Historic Sites and Monument Board of Canada, Agenda Paper, 1995-5.
[20] James Hodges, *Construction of the Great Victoria Bridge in Canada* (London: John Weale, 1860), 75.

remains of their poor countrymen would be forgotten," that they "determined to erect a monument upon the spot."[21]

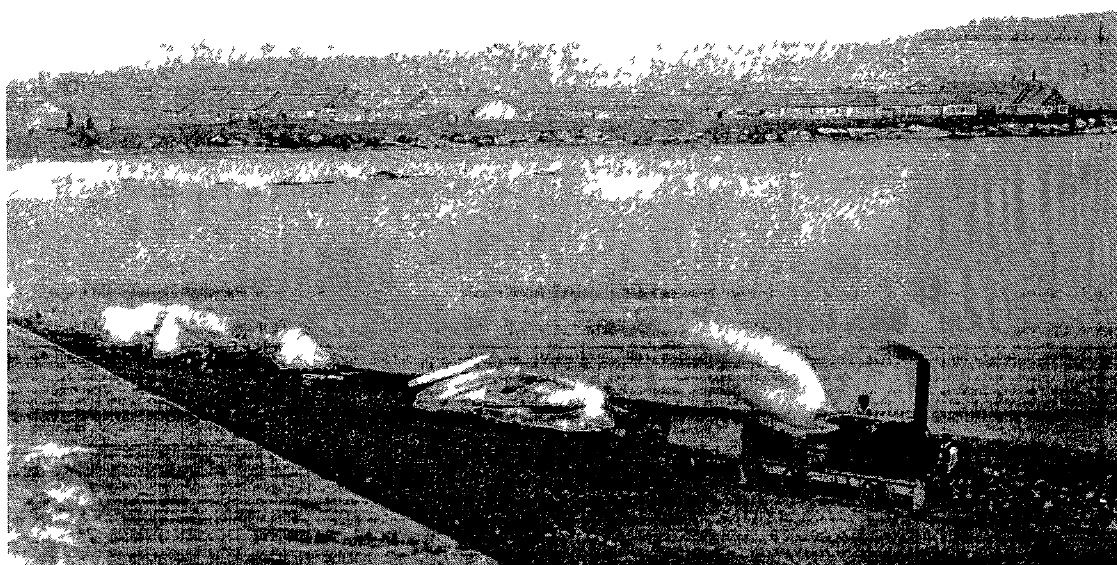

Figure 2.01. Housing for bridge workers (formerly the 1847 fever sheds), 1858-59. Source: William Notman, "Construction buildings from top of bridge, Victoria Bridge, Montreal, QC, 1858-59," McCord Museum of Canadian History, N-0000.41.2.

The monument took the form of a granite boulder that had either been dredged from the bed of the St. Lawrence during the construction of the Victoria Bridge or taken out of a field a few hundred yards from the gravesite.[22] On December 1, 1859, just three weeks before the bridge opened for traffic, a group of workers under the supervision of chief engineer James Hodges, concluded "the Herculean business," using a derrick to

[21] Ibid., 76. Legend has it that Irish Catholic workers refused to work until the victims of 1847 were commemorated; however, it remains unclear with whom the idea to create a memorial originated.

[22] Affidavit of Thomas George Fennell, 23 January 1911, LAC, RG46, vol. 45, vol. 119, file 13761, 189.

hoist the thirty-ton rock and affix it upon a six-foot stone pedestal.[23] On this massive and misshapen tombstone the following dedication was engraved:

> To Preserve from Desecration the Remains of 6000 Immigrants
> Who died of Ship Fever A.D. 1847-48
> This Stone is erected by the Workmen of Messrs. Peto, Brassey and Betts
> Employed in the Construction of the Victoria Bridge A.D. 1859

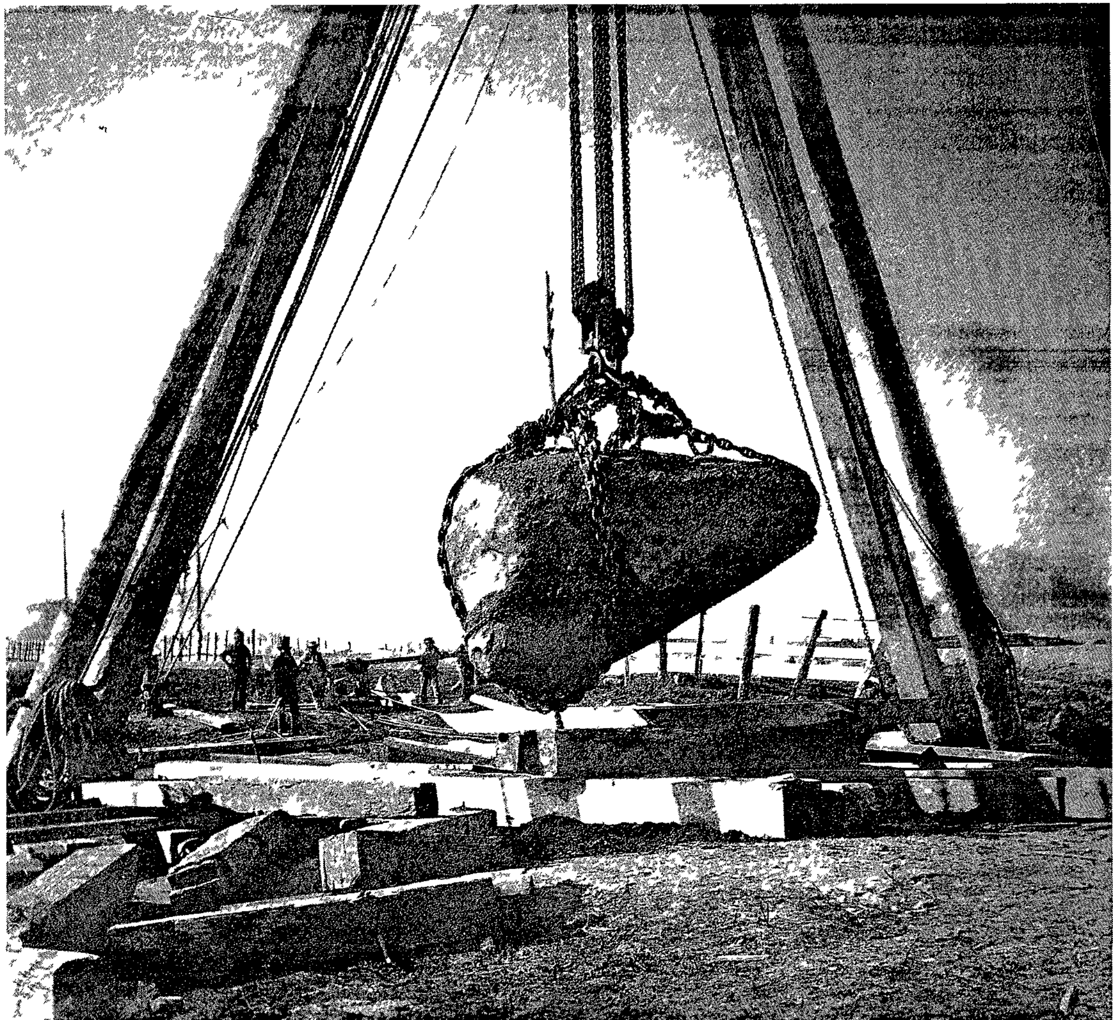

Figure 2.02. Erecting the Ship Fever Monument. Source: William Notman, "Raising large boulder, Victoria Bridge, Montreal, QC, 1859," McCord Museum of Canadian History, VIEW-7575.0.

[23] *Montreal Gazette*, 10 December 1859.

In the presence of the Anglican Bishop of Montreal, Francis Fulford, Reverend Ellegood, the current chaplain to the Protestant construction workers, and Reverend Canon Leach performed the dedication from atop the pedestal. Leach reassured the workers assembled that the monument would endure, as "its enormous bulk and weight are a security for its permanence." Recalling ministering to the small minority of Protestants who were among the sick in the fever sheds twelve years earlier, Leach spoke of "the calamities with which it pleased Almighty God to visit the immigrants" on the site where he then stood: "I have seen upwards of 1,800 persons of both sexes and all ages lying at the same moment, smitten down with that dreadful malady." He urged those in attendance to take some solace from the fact that "this durable monument was erected to preserve from desecration the spot where those immigrants sleep." Bishop Fulford picked up on this theme of permanence amidst change. Standing in front of the monument erected just a stone's throw from the entrance to the newly constructed Victoria Bridge—a powerful symbol of engineering ingenuity and industrial progress—Fulford vowed that "the bodies of those lying here interred be preserved from any irreverent usage." While recognizing that "the great and destructive pestilence" of 1847 denied a proper burial to its victims, the Anglican Bishop brought the ceremony to a close with the assurance that "the bodies of the faithful rest undisturbed until the day of resurrection."[24]

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[24] *Montreal Witness*, 7 December 1859.

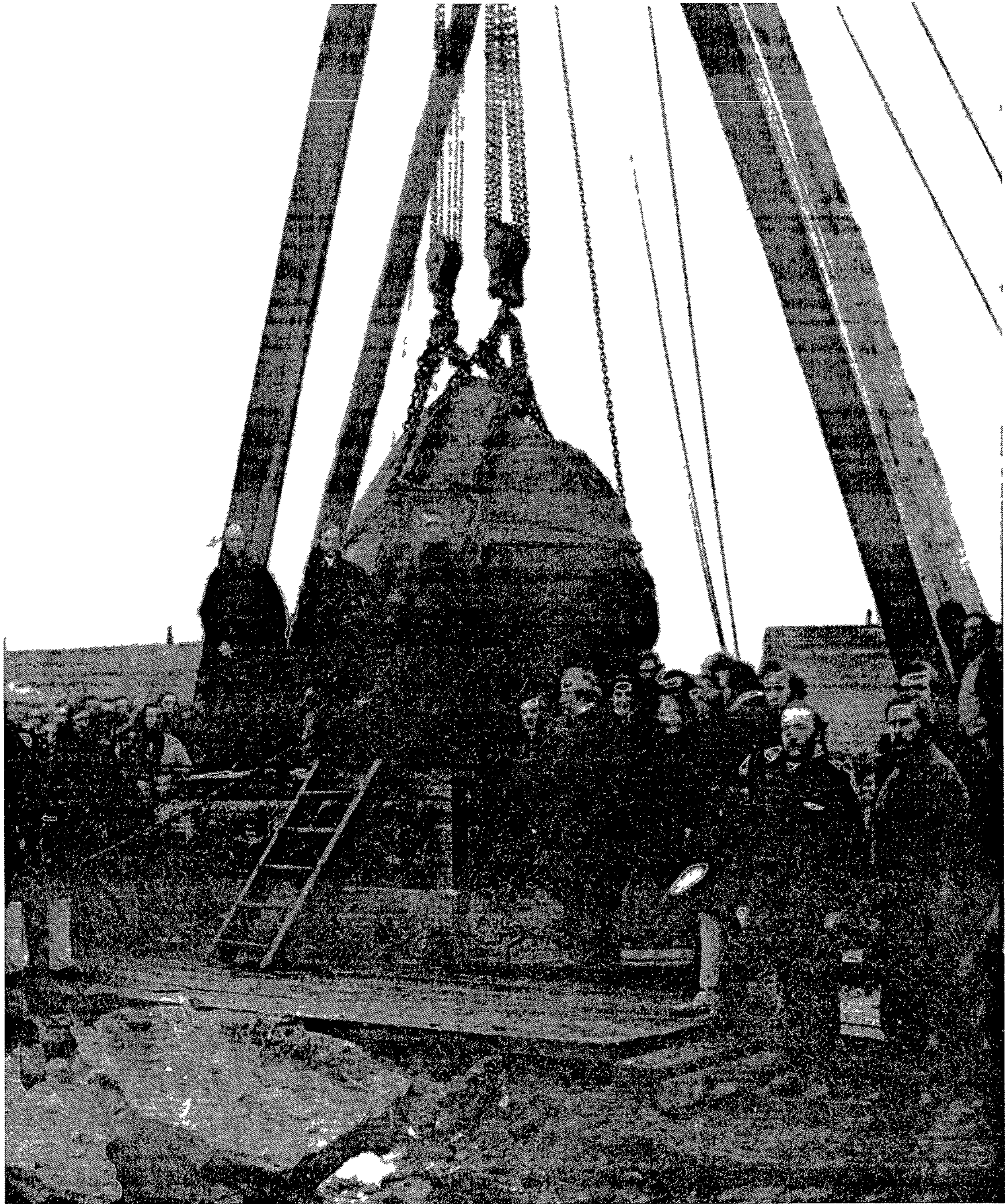

Figure 2.03: The Dedicatory Ceremony, 1 December 1859. Source: William Notman "Laying the Monumental Stone, marking the graves of 6000 immigrants, Victoria Bridge, Montreal, QC, 1859," McCord Museum of Canadian History, N-0000.193.157.

Despite the preponderance of Irish Catholics buried in the mass graves, representatives of the Roman Catholic hierarchy were not invited to the 1859 dedication ceremony and thus denied the opportunity to consecrate the ground in which lay the bodies of their faithful. Their notable absence at the ceremony was indicative of the growing animus that existed between Catholics and Protestants in Montreal, where religious bigotry was routinely preached from the pulpit and propagated by the press. The same edition of the *Montreal Witness*, a newspaper well known for its anti-papist views, that reported on the dedicatory ceremony also featured an editorial characterizing Roman Catholicism as "a sect which takes no care to conceal its treasonable designs."[25] Such outbursts were inextricably linked to rising sectarian tensions in the city where, since mid-century, to be Irish in Montreal was increasingly associated with being Catholic.[26] In this context, representatives of the Anglo-Protestant establishment were clearly not interested in identifying the victims of typhus as predominantly Irish Catholic and risk inaugurating a monument that might lend credence to a nascent movement of radical Irish nationalism, which looked to the Famine as evidence of British misgovernment and even genocide. As dutiful Christians, they would do what they could to "treat the dead with reverence and regard," but would steer clear of any memorial exercise delving into the increasingly politicized history of the Famine, for fear of exacerbating strained relations betweens Irish Catholics and Anglo-Protestants in Montreal.[27]

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Just three years prior to the monument's inauguration, the St. Patrick's Society, a fraternal organization long open to all Irish men, reconstituted itself as an exclusively Catholic Irish Society.

[27] *Montreal Witness*, 7 December 1859.

Rock in a Hard Place

Less than twenty years after the Irish influx into Montreal, Famine memory also had the potential of fracturing Irish Catholic relations with their francophone coreligionists and even exposing fissures within the city's Irish Catholic community itself. Unlike those who advocated a radically nationalist construction of the Famine, an influential cohort of Irish Catholics in the city did not see the advantage of dredging up memories of the Famine, particularly while they were attempting to maintain the integrity of Irish parishes in the city. In 1866, when Bishop Ignace Bourget, in an attempt to allay Irish fears about the realignment of parish boundaries, wrote a pastoral letter reminding the Irish of the assistance they were offered by French-speaking Catholics in 1847, many Irish Catholics were outraged. St. Patrick's congregation, represented by Father Patrick Dowd and Thomas D'Arcy McGee, let it be known that they were not interested in dwelling on the Famine experience, as it would only weaken their already vulnerable position in Montreal. Clearly, some Irish Catholics, particularly those who were more established and longer settled in the city, were eager to project an image of respectability and preferred not to be pushed to recall the destitute state in which the Irish arrived in 1847.[28]

In the years following this controversy, however, groups of Irish Catholics in the city, primarily those affiliated with St. Ann's parish in Griffintown, became interested in commemorating the Famine and began to look upon the Ship Fever Monument as an important Irish Catholic landmark. The first collective, albeit informal, act of Famine

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[28] For an analysis of the Irish Catholic response to Bourget's pastoral letter see Rosalyn Trigger, "The Geopolitics of the Irish-Catholic Parish in Nineteenth-Century Montreal." *Journal of Historical Geography* 27, no. 4 (2001): 559-561.

remembrance by Irish Catholics at the memorial site took place in July 1870, ironically the same year that title to the memorial site was transferred to the Anglican Bishop of Montreal in perpetuity. Father Hogan, the pastor of St. Ann's, led a small group that brought Father M.B. Buckley, a visiting priest from Ireland, on a tour of notable Irish sites in the city. Buckley was brought to see the plot of land "where so many of [his] fellow countrymen so miserably perished." The Irish priest was moved by what he saw, but was also perplexed by the mention of "6,000 immigrants" in the monument's inscription.[29] "Why," he wondered, "did they not say Irish?"[30] Despite this glaring omission, Irish claims to the monument were further strengthened by the mid-1880s, when the Fathers of the Redemptorists assumed control of St. Ann's Church. They introduced the tradition of visiting the memorial site to hold an annual Requiem service in June "for the repose of the souls of the thousands of Irish Catholics whose bones are there interred."[31]

These commemorative acts, however, were infrequent and small in scale, leaving the site unattended for much of the year. *The True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, the mouthpiece of Irish Catholics in the city lamented the fact that "the tall, tangled grass and the sturdy weed riot luxuriantly over the neglected plot where man's feet seldom stray."[32] By 1895, Montreal's chapter of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), formed just

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[29] Rev. M. B. Buckley, *Diary of a Tour in America* (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers & Walker, 1889), 64-65.
[30] Ibid., 65.
[31] *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, 26 November 1898.
[32] *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, 7 April 1897.

three years earlier, was equally distressed by the desolate state of the burial grounds.[33] As a Catholic fraternal organization with a mandate to maintain a sense of the history and traditions of Ireland among the diaspora, the AOH took it upon itself to act as guardians of the site (a role it continues to play to the present day). As the most militantly nationalist of the Irish societies in Montreal, the AOH was also interested in the memorial site for political reasons. For the city's Hibernians, and other nationalists of the same ideological persuasion, the Famine was viewed as the most heinous of the many historical wrongs committed by the British against Irish Catholics, and was, therefore, a powerfully symbolic historical event that could be invoked as part of the struggle for Irish independence. In their bid to gain ownership of the site, delegates from the Order approached Anglican Archdeacon Ker, promising to construct a fence around the monument, erect a plain cross at the entrance to the cemetery, and landscape the plot with grass and flowers. However, Bishop Bond, speaking on behalf of the Archdeacon, denied their request on the grounds that "men of more than one denomination were buried there."[34] This scuttled attempt to take possession of the burial site served as an unwelcome reminder to the AOH that the Ship Fever Monument was never intended to be an Irish Catholic Famine memorial and its Anglican trustees were intent on keeping it that way.

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[33] Founded in 1836 in New York City, the AOH eventually expanded throughout the United States and to Ireland, Australia, Scotland, and England. The first Canadian chapter was established in Montreal on November 20th, 1892. By 1909, almost six thousand Irish-Canadians had joined divisions in Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island. See John O'Dea, *History of the AOH and Ladies' Auxiliary,* vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Keystone, 1923), 11; and A.C. Hepburn, "The Ancient Order of Hibernians in Irish Politics, 1905-14," *Cithara* 10, no. 2 (1971): 5-17.

[34] *Montreal Gazette*, 2 March 1910.

Commemorating the Famine Jubilee

Though increasingly disillusioned with the monument and its caretakers, Irish societies were not deterred from appropriating the memorial site to mark the 50th anniversary of the Famine migration to Montreal.[35] On September 19, 1897 a commemorative event was organized on a scale "never before seen in the history of the Irish Catholics of Montreal."[36] In addition to the 5,000 Irish Montrealers carrying banners and bunting who walked the two-kilometre route from St. Ann's church in Griffintown to the reputed burial grounds, some 20,000 spectators lined Wellington Street and followed the procession to the commemorative site.[37] As the united choirs of the city sang a requiem, the immense crowd gathered around a platform erected for the occasion and the guests of honour took their positions on stage. After Catholic Archbishop Bruchési offered prayers, several of the city's most prominent Irish Catholic leaders, including Father Strubbe, pastor of St. Ann's parish, Dr. J.J. Guerin, then president of the St. Patrick's Society, Michael Quinn, M.P. for the riding of Ste. Anne, and Mr. Justice Frank Curran, Judge of the Superior Court of Montreal delivered orations that drew upon familiar nationalist themes. From their perspective, the Irish who were exiled in 1847 and perished on the shores of the St. Lawrence died as martyrs preserving their nationality and their faith. Their courage was only matched by that of the priests, nuns, and French-Canadian

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[35] Interest from Irish groups in installing their own monument dates back to as early as 1883, when members of the St. Patrick's Society were in favour of erecting "a suitable monument" at the gravesite. See *True Witness & Catholic Chronicle*, 14 March 1883.

[36] *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, 22 September 1897.

[37] *Montreal Gazette*, 20 September 1897. The Irish societies represented in the procession included the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Catholic Order of Foresters, the Catholic Mutual Benefit Association, the Irish Benevolent Society, and St. Patrick's Society.

families who took in orphans and ministered to the needs of the Irish throughout that calamitous summer.[38] But the most insistent message that came across during the commemorative ceremony oscillated between self-flagellation and self-congratulation. Collectively remembering 1847 not only presented an occasion to celebrate the degree to which Montreal's Irish had overcome adversity in the fifty years since the Famine, it also served as a reminder of how derelict they had been in their duty to honour the memory of their predecessors.

Several speakers at the commemorative event took the opportunity to express their disappointment that Irish Catholics had yet to secure proprietary control over the site from Anglican authorities. For Father Strubbe, it was essential that the land upon which the monument stood be transferred to the Catholic Church, so that the cemetery could be properly consecrated and prayers for the dead performed regularly.[39] Under such circumstances that prevented Irish Catholics from acquiring the property, Strubbe and Justice Frank Curran suggested transferring "the bones of the departed…to a more fitting place, namely, Côte des Neiges Cemetery."[40] This proposal to relocate the remains is not that surprising, considering that since the mid-nineteenth century Catholic and Protestant Montrealers had looked to the romantic landscape of cemeteries on Mount Royal as

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[38] A special committee appointed by Montreal's City Council to draft an address to the Queen, the Imperial government, and to the three branches of the provincial government estimated "the number of Orphans, amounting within the first fortnight, to about five hundred, and likely to increase at the end of the season, to thousands." Minutes of a Meeting of the City Council of Montreal, 23 June 1847, 1847 Immigration file, City of Montreal Archives, Fonds de la Ville de Montréal, Montreal, QC.
[39] *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, 22 September 1897.
[40] Ibid.

respectable and dignified burial sites for their dead.[41] When compared to the 365 picturesque acres of Côte des Neiges Cemetery, designed by surveyor and architect Henri-Maurice Perrault, the bleak, industrial milieu of Pointe Saint-Charles struck some at the commemorative ceremony as a highly inappropriate, even sacrilegious, resting place for Famine migrants.

Irish Catholic leaders at the jubilee commemorative ceremony expressed even greater disenchantment with the Ship Fever Monument that marked the site of the burial grounds. To some, the boulder appeared crude in comparison to the polished bronze and marble statuary that was being erected at a feverish pace in Montreal and cities throughout North America and Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. In this context, it is easy enough to see why Justice Curran referred disparagingly to the 1859 memorial as "that primitive rock" and recommended that a monument to the Famine Irish should be as worthy of commemoration as the monumental shaft built a year earlier in Côte des Neiges cemetery, honouring the memory of the Patriotes of 1837 and 1838.[42] In addition to petitioning for a Famine memorial that was more appropriately dignified in design, there were voices that called for what they imagined would be a more authentically Irish monument to the victims of 1847, one that would enhance "the reputation of the Irish people, not only of this city and Dominion, but of the Irish race the

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[41] See Meredith G. Watkins, "The Cemetery and Cultural Memory: Montreal, 1860-1900," *Urban History Review* 31, no. 1 (2002): 52-62.

[42] *Montreal Gazette*, 20 September 1897. Côte des Neiges, the main Roman Catholic cemetery, was founded in 1855, three years after Mount Royal, the main cemetery for Protestants, opened its gates.

world over."[43] In its coverage of the event, *The True Witness and Catholic Chronicle* pronounced that the Ship Fever Monument "came from stranger hands and is in no sense an Irish monument," echoing a sentiment that resonated throughout the jubilee ceremony.[44]

A Moving Memorial

Spurred on by the lack of regard that a number of prominent Irish Catholics had for the Ship Fever Monument, the Grand Trunk Railway (GTR), which since 1852 had helped transform much of Pointe Saint-Charles into Montreal's hub of industry and transportation, began in 1898 to lobby Bishop Bond and the Anglican Church to sell the memorial site. Intent on acquiring the track land near the entrance of the bridge, the GTR viewed the monument as an impediment to development. Bishop Bond, though reluctant to relinquish ownership of land that was passed to his predecessor in trust, agreed to organize a committee that would take statements from people having personal knowledge of the memorial site, and dig a series of test pits near the monument "to ascertain whether or not there were any remains in the vicinity."[45] Apart from the bones of a dog, no remains were discovered. The lack of evidence obtained by the Anglican committee persuaded Bishop Bond that the site was not a burial ground, increasing the likelihood that GTR would soon succeed in moving the monument and acquiring the land it was designed to protect.

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[43] *Montreal Gazette*, 20 September 1897.
[44] *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, 22 September 1897.
[45] *Montreal Herald*, 30 November 1898.

Many Irish Catholics were incensed by the GTR's attempt to violate the sanctity of the memorial site. The possibility of this collective anger turning to aggression was put quite plainly to the railway's management by M.P. Michael Quinn and Father Strubbe, who insisted that "if [the GTR] had any desire to prevent serious trouble and perhaps violence at the hands of the Irish people of Ste. Ann's Ward [*sic*] they would refrain from any desecration of the last resting place of the unfortunate Irish emigrants at Point St. Charles [*sic*]."[46] These sentiments were given more formal expression when representatives from Irish societies met in Hibernia Hall on November 29, 1898 to protest the sale of the site to the GTR and pass a resolution objecting to "the desecration of the remains of 6,000 Irish immigrants…interred in the cemetery at Point St. Charles." Together they pledged "to prevent by every means in their power the carrying out of such a project."[47]

Determined to have their resolution be seen as representative of the views of all the Montreal Irish, the delegates at Hibernia Hall attempted to muffle dissent, denouncing as "unauthorized and unworthy any action by individuals presuming to act on behalf of Irish Catholics who may favour the proposed desecration."[48] As the delegates anticipated, however, it would not be easy to maintain the appearance of consensus, given that Irish Catholics in the city did not speak as one regarding the proposed sale of the burial site to the railway company. While some—including author Mary Anne Sadlier, one of the few women whose voice registered in the commemorative discourse—did continue to look

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[46] *Montreal Daily Star*, 30 November 1898. Ste. Anne Ward, comprised of Griffintown and the eastern section of Pointe Saint-Charles, had a large Irish constituency.
[47] *Montreal Herald*, 30 November 1898.
[48] Ibid.

upon the boulder as "a holy and a righteous object" that ought not be moved, a variety of alternative memorial sites were suggested as news spread of the projected sale.[49] One proposal assigned the monument to a piece of property on the dividing line of the Mount Royal and Cote des Neiges cemeteries.[50] Another, which soon proved prescient, was to relocate the boulder to St. Patrick's Square "in the heart of St. Ann's Ward [*sic*], the greatest Irish Catholic Parish in all Canada…where so many survivors of the terrible scourge still worship."[51] By the turn of the century, these varied responses by Irish Catholics in Montreal led to considerable uncertainty about the fate of the monument and the surrounding burial ground.

All of "the loud protestations and warmly debated opinions and resolutions" that had been put forth by Irish Catholics since 1898 ultimately proved irrelevant, however, as the Ship Fever Monument was unceremoniously moved several blocks west to St. Patrick's Square, near the Wellington Street Bridge.[52] In the early morning of December 21, 1900, seven carpenters set to work constructing a platform.[53] A few hours later "the famous monument" was conveyed to the Square on a flat car that was run down the track on St. Patrick Street and quickly set into place.[54] After much speculation among Irish Catholics about who was responsible for the sudden move, it came to light that the GTR, having failed to secure ownership of the site from its Anglican trustees, had gone ahead and taken the monument out of the path of progress and into the heart of Griffintown.

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[49] *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, 24 February 1900.
[50] *Montreal Herald*, 30 November 1898.
[51] *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, 24 December 1898.
[52] *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, 5 January 1900.
[53] *Montreal Daily Star*, 22 December 1900.
[54] *Montreal Gazette*, 22 December 1900.

Though some Irish Catholics had themselves at one point contemplated moving the monument or constructing one deemed more authentically Irish, the railway's heist had the effect of generating an unprecedented amount of affection for the site and its stone memorial. With its displacement to St. Patrick's Square, the boulder now not only stood as a memorial to the martyrs of 1847 but also came to symbolize the indignities suffered by their descendants living in Montreal a half century later. Presenting a united front in condemning what they perceived as an act of iconoclasm, representatives from Irish societies met on May 5, 1901 in the basement of St. Gabriel's Church in Pointe Saint-Charles.[55] Three weeks later a larger meeting was organized in St. Patrick's Presbytery, this one including representatives from each of the five Irish parishes of Montreal.[56] Together they formulated a document described as "a unanimous expression of the sentiment of the Irish Catholics of Montreal" that was sent to newspapers, Anglican Archbishop Bond, and to Montreal's City Council.[57] Referring to the various forms of persecution culminating in the Famine that the Irish had suffered "for Faith and Fatherland," they insisted that "Irishmen to-day still look upon this burial place as holy ground, not only because it is the resting place of Christians, but also for the reason that it is a spot marking a sad but heroic epoch in the history of our race." Expressing "bitter regret that the monument should have been removed from the old cemetery it was

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[55] General Meeting Minutes of the Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal, 24 April 1901, Concordia University Archives, Montreal, P026–Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal fonds, 1864-1984.
[56] These parishes included St. Patrick's, St. Ann's, St. Mary's, St. Anthony's, and St. Gabriel's.
[57] *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, 1 June 1901.

intended to preserve from desecration," they urged the Anglican Archbishop to force the GTR to restore the monument to the site in Pointe Saint-Charles.[58]

While the protests against the GTR came primarily from local Irish groups, there was also a concerted effort made to cast the stone as "a national monument" cherished by all Irish Canadians.[59] The *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, a newspaper that just three years earlier had looked askance at the monument, reported that "the Irish Catholic press of the country has lent its voice to tell the Irishmen of Montreal and all whom it may concern, that the Irish of Canada insist upon it that sacrilegious hands be not allowed to touch the last resting place of the Irish victims of persecution, Famine and pestilence in 1847–48."[60] Prominent figures in the Irish community, such as J.J. Guerin, echoed these sentiments in the year following the removal of the monument, insisting, "It was that not the Irish of Montreal alone, but the Irish throughout Canada, from Sarnia to Halifax [who] were indignant and protested against this violent spoliation of the graves."[61]

Whether bowing to pressure applied by Irish groups in Montreal or from further afield, the Anglican Archbishop, as official titleholder to the land, gave formal notification to the railway in August 1901, accusing it of illegally trespassing and interfering with the property, and demanded the return of the monument.[62] But the GTR, which had laid down three railway tracks and was using part of the plot as a dumping

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[58] Ibid.
[59] *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, 27 April 1901.
[60] *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, 15 June 1901.
[61] *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, 28 December 1901. J.J. Guerin would go on to serve as Mayor of Montreal (1910-1912) and Member of Parliament for the riding of Ste. Ann (1925-1930).
[62] The Reverend William Bennett Bond, Lord Archbishop of the Diocese of Montreal to the GTR Company of Canada, 1 August 1901, LAC, RG 30, vol. 2077, file "Documents Regarding Monument at Point St. Charles, Montreal."

ground, had no intention of replacing the memorial, and now publicly refuted the notion that the site was ever used as a cemetery.[63] Though Archbishop Bond shared this opinion, he did feel strongly that the land should remain undeveloped "because a memorial stone [had] been placed upon it to indicate a very sad and important event in the history of the country." Irish groups did not appreciate being told that the land they considered sacred was a spurious Famine burial site, nor did they relish having to consult with the Anglican trustees of a monument that they increasingly looked upon as their own. Nonetheless, there was some solace in learning of the Archbishop's shared determination to restore the Ship Fever Monument to its original site.

This uneasy alliance, however, could not compel the GTR to reverse its decision, and the monument remained a fixture in St. Patrick's Square. In its new setting the boulder continued to attract its share of political controversy and soon became something of a touchstone to test Irishness in Ste. Anne Ward. Rumours had circulated since 1900 that some prominent figures within the Irish Catholic community, including Daniel Gallery, then M.P. for Ste. Anne, had collaborated with the GTR and "consented to the removal of the monument from the cemetery."[64] When this issue was raised at a meeting of Irish parishes and societies in December 1901, it became clear that even being suspected of maligning the memory of 1847 could ruin a reputation within the Irish Catholic community. As *The True Witness and Catholic Chronicle* put it, "the desecration of the cemetery is so abhorrent to Irish sentiment that we would not forgive

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[63] *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, 28 December 1901.
[64] Ibid.

one of our own people who had allowed himself to be a consenting party to it."[65] Seizing the political opportunity, Gallery's rivals in the 1905 municipal elections rekindled long simmering suspicions of Gallery by placarding the boulder "with posters charging him with its removal." In celebrating their electoral win, his opponents once again made the monument the centrepiece of their smear campaign by covering it with crêpe paper.[66] While still an aide-mémoire to the victims of 1847, the boulder had been ascribed political and social meanings constructed at a local level. An object once promising permanence, originally meant to preserve the integrity of the Pointe Saint-Charles burial site, now stood displaced in the centre of Irish Catholic Montreal as a symbol of the cemetery's desecration and for some a shameful reminder that Irish Catholics in the city had failed to protect the graves of their forebears.

As the monument approached its ten-year anniversary in St. Patrick's Square, it seemed unlikely that it would be restored to its original position in Pointe Saint-Charles, especially given that the attention of the city's Irish Catholics was increasingly diverted from Montreal's Famine site to Grosse-Île. The movement to build an enormous Celtic cross on the quarantine island generated interest from Montrealers, particularly those affiliated with the AOH, whose Quebec City division was spearheading the project. By 1908, when it was announced at the annual banquet of the St. Patrick's Society in Montreal that the Canadian government would provide a free site atop Telegraph Hill on Grosse-Île to mark the spot where thousands of Irish were buried, it looked like the quarantine station had supplanted the site at Pointe Saint-Charles as the locus of Famine

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[65] Ibid.
[66] *Montreal Gazette*, 24 January 1911.

commemoration in Quebec and Canada. This notion was reflected in the official booklet published in conjunction with the large-scale commemorative event held on Grosse-Île on August 15, 1909. Reference was made to the profound impact that the Famine migration had had upon Montreal in 1847, but the city's Ship Fever Monument that had once marked the burial grounds was dismissed as a "monument standing wide of the mark."[67] For the organizers of the Grosse-Île commemoration, an event which drew 8,000 participants, "No other place was…more appropriate for a proper and lasting national memento of so grim an episode in Irish and Canadian history."[68]

Figure 2.04. Unveiling the Celtic Cross on Grosse-Île, August 15, 1909.
Source: Jules-Ernest Livernois, LAC, PA-136924.

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[67] *The Grosse-Isle Monument Commemorative Souvenir Issued on the Occasion of the Unveiling, on August 15th, 1909, of the Monument Erected to the Irish Victims of the Plague of 1847-48* (Quebec City: Telegraph Printing Co., 1909), 43.
[68] Ibid., 5.

Figure 2.05. Kneeling in prayer during the commemorative ceremony.
Source: ***Montreal Standard*****, August, 28 1909.**

Figure 2.06. C.J. Foy (Mayor of Perth, Ont., and National Director of the AOH) addresses crowd. Source: ***Montreal Standard*****, August 20, 1909.**

While the 46-foot Celtic Cross on Grosse-Île cast a long shadow over Montreal's Famine memorial, the 1909 commemorative event eventually had the effect of reinvigorating the movement to restore the Ship Fever Monument to the burial site in Pointe Saint-Charles. The sorry state of the memorial site was mentioned in several speeches delivered during the dedicatory ceremony in August. Most notably, radical Irish nationalist Matthew Cummings, national president of the AOH in America, condemned "A greedy corporation in the city of Montreal [that] dared to lay tracks across the graves." To great applause, Cummings urged the "Men of Canada [to] never rest until it is replaced on the pedestal where it was taken from."[69] With the commemorative event "still fresh in the memories of the citizens of Montreal," members of the AOH and St. Patrick's Society, seemed to take Cummings' message to heart.[70] In short order they, along with the Irish parishes of the city, managed to procure several thousand signatures on a petition urging the Railway Commission to deny the GTR's application and preserve the historic burial site.[71] By the end of February 1910, Irish Catholic societies had generated considerable interest in this issue through the press and had managed to enlist the support of City Council, which agreed to send a legal representative to a meeting of the Railway Commissioners in Ottawa to protest the expropriation of the burial site.[72]

It was not until January 1911 that the matter was finally adjudicated by the Railway Board of Commissioners. The central issue debated during the two-day session

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[69] *Montreal Gazette*, 16 August 1909.
[70] *Montreal Gazette*, 28 February 1910.
[71] *Montreal Daily Star*, 28 February 1910.
[72] Ibid.

in Ottawa was whether the plot of land in question was a cemetery and therefore whether the property could be bought or expropriated for commercial purposes. Charles Doherty, M.P. for Ste. Anne, and Henry Kavanagh, who presented evidence on behalf of the interests of Irish Catholics in Montreal, cited a number of affidavits given by long time residents of Pointe Saint-Charles in 1901, after the monument had been removed. These affidavits, including one given by ninety-year-old Sister Reed, of the Sisters of Charity, stated that bodies were buried in 1847 in the spot marked by the monument and that it was common knowledge in the area that the site was a cemetery.[73] Doherty and Kavanagh also called representatives of the Catholic and Anglican churches to the witness box to define what precisely constituted a cemetery. Father Callaghan, curate at St. Anthony's, asserted that a cemetery is any plot of ground where a number of Catholics were known to be buried, regardless of whether records were kept. Canon Ellegood, Anglican chaplain to the Bridge workers in 1859, who could not recall if the land had been consecrated as a cemetery, maintained that "it was understood that [the site] was never to be used for secular purposes."[74]

In response, the GTR, represented by W.H. Biggar, argued that the property was not a cemetery in the past and at present was essential to the railway "for the extension of their yards and to avoid congestion." Referring to his own witness statements, which confirmed that burials of immigrants in 1847 took place in various sites throughout Pointe Saint-Charles, the GTR's lawyer argued that the main cemetery was located next to the old immigrant sheds located near the Wellington Basin some distance from the plot

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[73] *Montreal Gazette*, 24 January 1911.
[74] *Montreal Daily Star*, 23 January 1911.

of land in question.[75] Either ignoring or unaware of evidence to the contrary, Biggar even called into question the significance that the site in Pointe Saint-Charles had traditionally had for Irish Catholics, contending that "no person regarded the place as a cemetery, and that there was little in the fact that some people went down to the place and took part in some kind of ceremony."[76]

After two days of listening to these arguments, J.P. Mabee, the Chief Commissioner of the Railway Board, remained unconvinced that the Ship Fever Monument marked the precise location of the burial ground. He was persuaded, though, that bodies were buried in the general vicinity of the monument. In a ruling designed to accommodate the interests of both parties, Mabee granted the GTR permission to expropriate the entire site of the reputed burial ground except for a thirty-foot plot of land where the monument would be returned, fifteen feet from where it originally stood to allow for the construction of a road. The title to the memorial plot remained in the possession of the Anglican Bishop of Montreal, but by June 1912 the land surrounding the enclosed memorial site was sold to the GTR for $6,000, with the stipulation that the Railway retained $2,000 to maintain the Ship Fever memorial site.[77]

With the land transaction settled, the GTR returned the monument close to its original spot at the north end of the Victoria Bridge, by that time a busy network of railroad yards, sheds, and tracks.[78] Although representatives of Irish societies were initially disheartened with the decision of the Railway Commissioners, "as they hoped to

[75] *Montreal Gazette*, 24 January 1911.
[76] *Montreal Daily Star*, 24 January 1911.
[77] T.P. Slattery, *Loyola and Montreal: A History* (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1962), 158.
[78] *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, 22 June 1912.

prevent the railway acquiring any part of the property,"[79] by 1913, the GTR had done enough to improve the appearance of the memorial site, including installing an iron fence, to appease those who had fought for the return of the monument.[80]

On 17 August 1913, after a year's delay, the Ancient Order of Hibernians were at last ready to oversee a rededication ceremony, almost as grand in scale as the one organized sixteen years earlier to commemorate the Famine jubilee.[81] An assemblage of Montreal Irish Catholics, led by representatives of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and St. Patrick's Society, accompanied by a number of guests from Quebec City, Ottawa, and the United States, gathered at St. Ann's Church. In procession they followed a route decorated with streamers and flags to the memorial site, where a platform had been erected for the occasion. Standing in front of the Irish flag bearing the harp and sunburst, T.M. Quigley, AOH County President, gave a short historical account of the memorial, proclaiming that "the Ship Fever Monument was now in its proper resting place for all time." J.J. Regan, national president of the AOH, reiterated his colleague's message by pointing to the boulder and promising, "As long as Irishmen live they will not be forgotten." The memorial would, for Regan, forever stand as a potent reminder of the Famine, particularly the "fidelity shown by [its] victims" and the "callousness displayed by authority." Departing from this nationalist reading, Charles Doherty adopted a more conciliatory tone in his speech, paying tribute to the people of Montreal, "Catholic and

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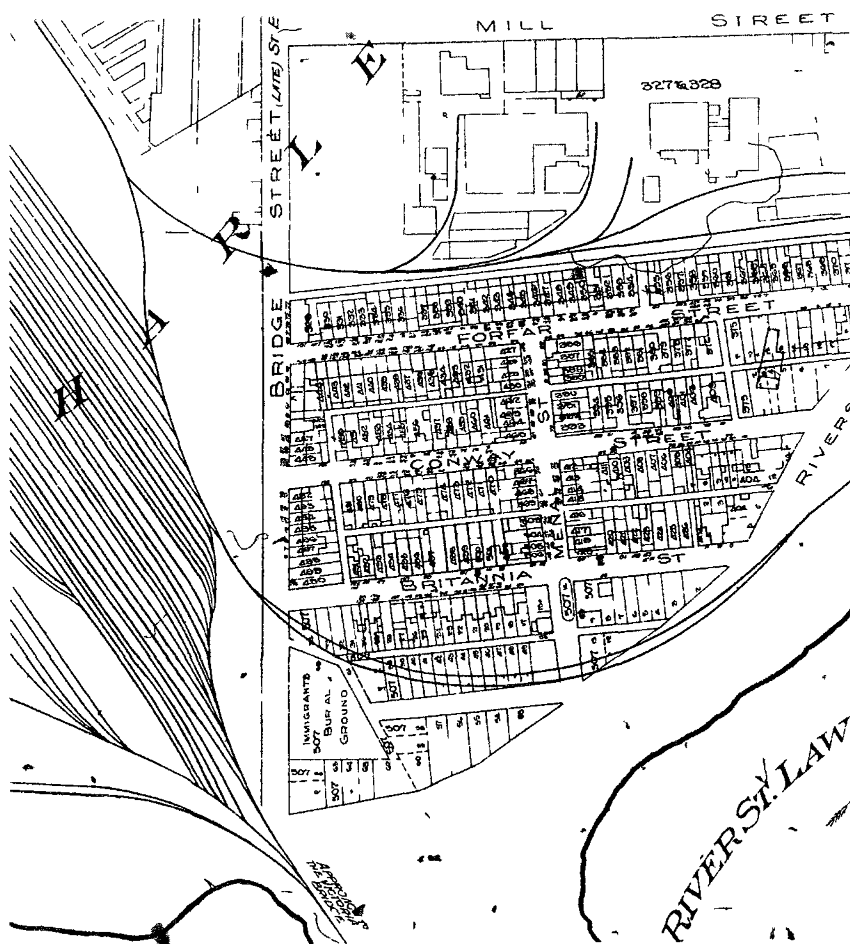
[79] *Montreal Gazette*, 25 January 1911.
[80] *Montreal Gazette*, 18 August 1913.
[81] *Montreal Daily Herald*, 30 September 1912, reported that a commemorative event was organized for 29 September 1912 but was called off due to inclement weather, to the disappointment of thousands of local Irish Canadians and hundreds more who made the trip from Quebec City and Ottawa to celebrate the return of the monument from St. Patrick's Square.

Protestant, French and English, and Irish, who succoured the immigrants." Having represented Irish Catholics in front of the Railway Commissioners two years earlier, Doherty chose to bring the rededication ceremony to a close on a cheery note by observing that the controversy surrounding the monument "had produced the good effect of awakening in the breasts of Irishmen a duty that had perhaps grown dormant in the lapse of years."[82]



Map 2.05. Victoriatown (Goose Village) and 1847 burial site, 1912. Source: Chas. E Goad, *Atlas of the City of Montreal and Vicinity : from Official Plans, Special Surveys, Showing Cadastral Numbers, Buildings & Lots* (Montreal: Goad, 1912-1914), 154.

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[82] *Montreal Gazette*, 18 August 1913.

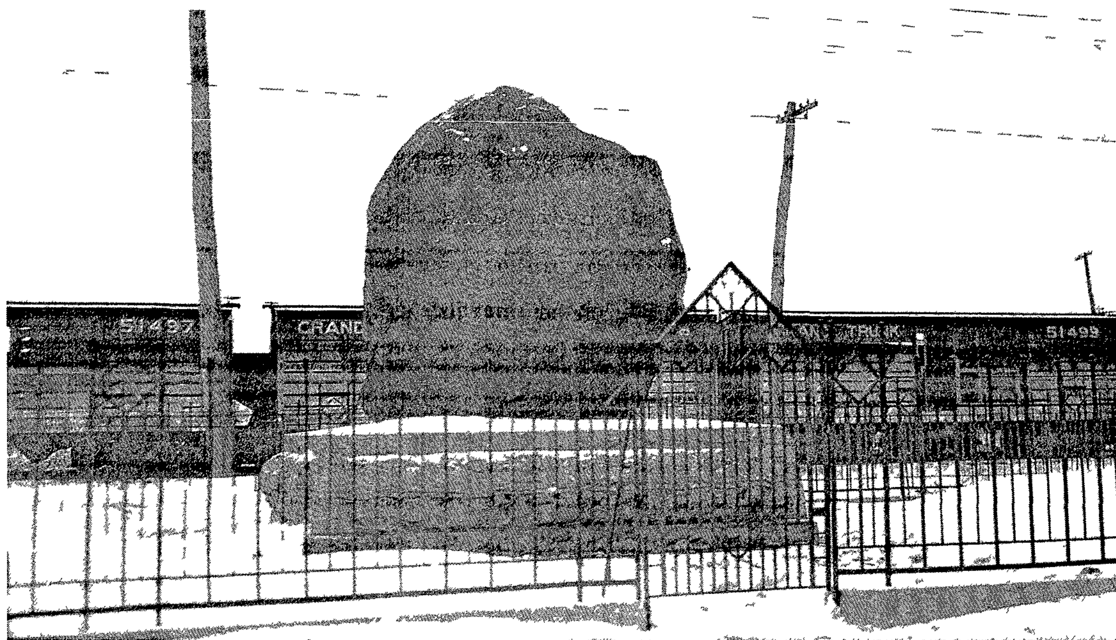

Figure 2.07. Monument on platform, 1914. Source: LAC, PA–061258.

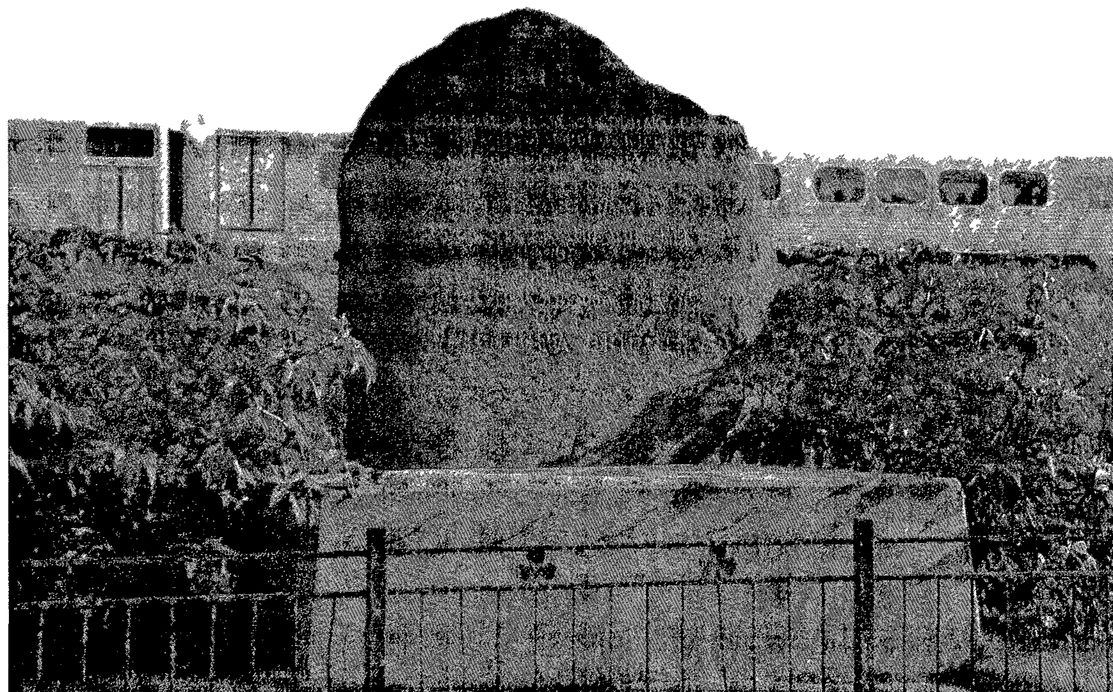

Figure 2.08. Still standing on platform ninety-two years later, August 2006.

That Lonesome Landmark

Despite such commemorative rhetoric, the movement to return the Ship Fever Monument to Pointe Saint-Charles was not simply motivated by a sense of duty to set straight the historical record of 1847, it was also a political struggle to protect what had come to be viewed as an Irish landmark—a rare, if rudimentary, symbol of power in the cultural landscape of Montreal. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the city was crowded with historic plaques and monuments promoting the two dominant ethnic groups' competing notions of national identity, leaving Irish Catholics largely excluded in what Alan Gordon refers to as "the public contest to shape the city's collective memories."[83] Though the reinstallation of the Ship Fever Monument publicly affirmed Irish claims to the memorial site, it did not immediately signal a shift in the agendas of the heritage elites that decided what was historically significant in the city.

The absence of Irish sites in Montreal's memorial landscape was in some ways a consequence of Irish Catholics' longstanding position as a politically marginalized and economically disadvantaged group in the city. In Griffintown, where they comprised one third of the population, and in other working class neighbourhoods in Montreal's industrial heartland such as Verdun, Victoriatown, and Pointe Saint-Charles, many Irish Catholics lived in overcrowded slums and worked as unskilled labourers.[84] However, Irish Catholics cannot fairly be lumped together and regarded as a powerless underclass in Montreal. Despite the adverse conditions experienced by many in the southwest region

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[83] Alan Gordon, *Making Public Pasts: The Contested Terrain of Montréal's Public Memories, 1891-1930* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 116.
[84] See Herbert Brown Ames, *The City Below the Hill: A Sociological Study of a Portion of the City of Montreal, Canada* (1897; repr., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 105.

of the city, they managed to exercise considerable local political influence, repeatedly returning Irish Catholics as their elected representatives. Moreover, by the early twentieth century, there were a significant number of Irish Catholics that had been integrated long enough into the Canadian socio-economic system to enjoy a degree of affluence, which was often accompanied by the move away from Irish enclaves to middle class neighbourhoods above the hill.[85] Two generations after the Famine, Irish Catholics, while still disproportionately represented in the ranks of the working class and largely excluded from the Anglo-Protestant ruling elite, increasingly traversed class lines and residential boundaries. They were now much less likely to be castigated as outsiders, a label more often reserved for Jewish, Italian, Syrian, Ukrainian, and Chinese immigrants who had settled more recently in Montreal.[86]

Though most Irish Catholic Montrealers by the beginning of the twentieth century likely considered themselves "Canadian first and foremost," it is also important to recognize that this identification did not necessarily loosen ties to Ireland or weaken allegiances to the nationalist cause.[87] The experience of the First World War suggests that Irish Catholics in Montreal could express loyalty to Canada and a strong desire for Irish independence simultaneously. At the outset of the war Charles Doherty echoed the sentiments of T.P. O'Connor and John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, by assuring that "nothing could aid the cause of Home Rule more than a united stand for

[85] Dorothy Suzanne Cross, "The Irish in Montreal, 1867-1896" (master's thesis, McGill University, 1969), 81-96.
[86] Sherry Olson and Patricia Thornton, "The Challenge of the Irish Catholic Community in Nineteenth-Century Montreal," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 35, no. 70 (2002): 357.
[87] Cross, "The Irish in Montreal," 268.

the Empire by the Irish people."[88] This call to arms inspired the Montreal Irish in 1914 to establish the Irish Canadian Rangers, a regiment that would eventually form the 199th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. However, following the Easter Rebellion of 1916 and the growing controversy over conscription in Ireland and Quebec, enlistment in the Irish battalion dropped off and the Rangers were disbanded. For some Irish Montrealers the decision to break up the battalion was seen as a betrayal and a sign of the persistent distrust of the Irish at home and abroad.[89] The AOH in Montreal, which in the early days of the war had distanced itself from the anti-British sentiment of its parent organization in the United States, had by 1917 adopted a more militant stance and began to reject the symbols and rhetoric of Empire while challenging many of their fellow Irish Catholics who remained committed to conscription and the cause of war.[90] The competing ideas over how the war should be waged and how Irish independence could be achieved indicate that the process of assimilation into Canadian society was ongoing and complex, with many Irish Catholics in the city, even those several generations removed from Ireland, struggling to reconcile their dual national identities.

The exigencies of wartime left the Ship Fever Monument largely neglected, but by the early 1920s groups of Irish Catholics in the city were once again drawn to the Irish memorial as a reminder of nineteenth century Irish migration to Montreal. It was at this time that annual walks to the Stone (a practice that continues to this day) became ritualized. Every year on the last Sunday of May, members of the AOH and its Ladies'

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[88] *Montreal Gazette*, 14 September 1914.
[89] Robin B. Burns, "The Montreal Irish and the Great War," *CCHA Historical Studies* 52 (1985): 80.
[90] *Montreal Gazette*, 26 March 1917.

Auxiliary, St. Patrick's Society, the Gaelic League, St. Ann's Young Men's Society, and representatives of the Catholic hierarchy would gather in front of St. Ann's church. Led by Irish pipers and mounted police, they would walk in procession to the monument where wreaths were laid, prayers recited, and addresses delivered.[91] For a relatively small group of Irish Catholics, often numbering no more than two hundred, this annual commemoration helped maintain some sense of connection to the events of 1847.

Repatriating Remains

A grisly discovery in 1942 once again raised the profile of the site, renewing Irish Catholics' sense of ownership of the monument and the burial site it marked.[92] In August, workers employed by Kennedy Construction Company engaged in the excavation of a passenger tunnel at the city approach to the Victoria Bridge unearthed what test pits dug by the Anglican Committee forty-four years earlier had failed to uncover: the remains of typhus victims in the vicinity of the Ship Fever Memorial. Over the course of a month, workers inadvertently disinterred "coffins of rotting pine wood, blackened by time,"[93] holding the remains of twelve individuals who had been buried in 1847 in "a long trench-like grave at the foot of Bridge Street."[94] For Irish Catholic organizations in Montreal, that immediately claimed the remains as those of Famine refugees, the discovery served

[91] *Montreal Gazette*, 30 May 1927.
[92] English language newspapers in the city reported on the discovery and the re-interment ceremony, but French language newspapers, with the exception of *La Presse*, which ran stories on August 5th and October 31st, took little notice of the Irish cemetery in 1942.
[93] *Montreal Gazette*, 4 August 1942.
[94] *Montreal Gazette*, 31 October 1942.

as a poignant reminder of the approaching centenary of 1847, and once again stirred popular interest in "the sad and terrible story of the great migration of the Irish people."[95]

The discovery was also a vindication for those who had long argued that the Ship Fever monument stood on hallowed ground. This was not the first time that remains of Famine migrants had been unearthed in Montreal. Bones were found in the 1870s during the excavation of the Wellington Basin (near the old emigrant sheds), in 1886 when the foundation of the Royal Mill on Mill Street was dug,[96] and in 1914 during a construction project on the site of the Seminary of Saint Sulpice.[97] But what made the exhumation near the Ship Fever Monument particularly significant was that it provided material evidence that Irish immigrants had also been buried around the memorial site. No longer could Irish Catholics be dismissed as having "a mistaken impression…that the six thousand unfortunate immigrants were buried in the plot about the monument,"[98] as suggested by the GTR and Anglican authorities in 1898. For John Loye, the President of the United Irish Societies of Montreal, the discovery of the bodies "prove[d] that this area comprises the burial ground of the 6,000 victims of…ship's fever," putting to rest any lingering misgivings about the authenticity of the memorial grounds as the cemetery of Irish Famine migrants.[99]

In conjunction with the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the St. Patrick's Society, Loye's United Irish Societies decided that the final step in establishing the sanctity of the

[95] *Montreal Gazette*, 4 August 1942.
[96] *Montreal Gazette*, 1 March 1910.
[97] *Liverpool Catholic Herald*, 6 June 1914.
[98] *Montreal Daily Star*, 30 November 1898.
[99] *Montreal Gazette*, 4 August 1942.

site would be to rebury the bodies next to the monument. Approval was sought from Anglican authorities, who officially remained proprietors of the memorial lot, and from the CNR, which had absorbed the GTR in 1923 and assumed ownership of the land where the bodies were unearthed. To the relief of Irish associations, the Bishop and the Railway were amenable to re-interring the remains next to the monument. Unlike their predecessors, the CNR were quick to accept the location of the monument and to develop its network of tracks and shops around the site.[100] The Anglican Bishop, Arthur Carlisle, also sanctioned the re-interment, believing that the discovery of bones in the area was what had originally motivated his predecessors to establish the stone monument in 1859.[101]

While representatives of the CNR and the Anglican Church initially showed little more than a superficial understanding of the origins of the memorial site, they were aware of the controversy it had attracted in the past, involving "some litigation about ownership of the land and/or the trusteeship thereof."[102] More importantly, they recognized the historic significance that the site had for Irish Catholics in Montreal and were quick to appreciate "some of the delicacies which enter into a ceremony of this character."[103] In his dispatches to Irish organizations in the city and to Bishop Carlisle, the CNR's general superintendent, R.C. Johnston, who assumed responsibility for

[100] R.C. Johnston to Right Reverend Arthur Carlisle, 29 October 1942, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal, Montreal, QC.
[101] Memorandum Re: Old Burying Ground–Point St. Charles, 4 August 1942, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal, Montreal, QC.
[102] Ibid.
[103] R.C. Johnston to Mr. Gardiner, 13 November 1942, LAC RG 30, vol. 2077, file "Documents Regarding Monument at Point St. Charles, Montreal."

organizing the re-interment of the remains, set out to be "sympathetically appreciative of both the religious and the sentimental interest therein of so many in Canada, the United States and in other lands who…have a connection with this epidemic and its victims."[104] While recognizing that, "inasmuch as the majority originated in Ireland it is assumed that the Roman Catholic religion was the faith of most of the victims," Johnston acknowledged that "the victims of the Ship Fever Plague represented all denominations," and thus organized a re-interment observance on November 1, 1942 (All Saints' Day) that accommodated Irish Montrealers from across the religious divide.[105]

Figure 2.09. Re-interment ceremony at Ship Fever Monument, November 20, 1942. Source: LAC, e007913794.

[104] Ibid.
[105] R.C. Johnston to Right Reverend Arthur Carlisle, 29 October 1942, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal, Montreal, QC.

Figure 2.10. Laying remains to rest, November 20, 1942. Source: LAC, e007913792.

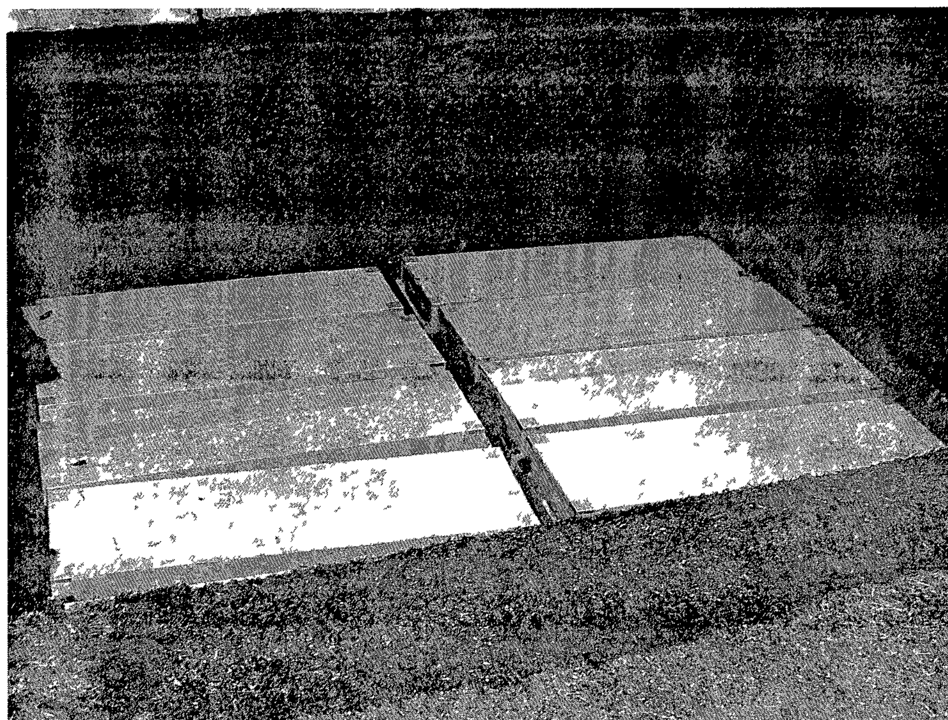

Figure 2.11. Coffins in grave, November 20,1942. Source: LAC, e007913793.

The day's religious observances began a few blocks away from the memorial site at St. Ann's Church where at 2:30pm a solemn Libera was held in honour of the 1847 typhus victims. The event had been carefully choreographed to ensure that by the time Irish Catholic participants in the ceremony had made their way from St. Ann's to the Ship Fever Monument, John Dixon, Dean of Montreal, was bringing his brief Anglican service to a close.[106] By 3:10 pm the contingent of Irish Catholics had joined a small group of their Protestant compatriots at the memorial site for the civil component of the ceremony. They gathered next to the freshly dug grave, in which twelve plain gray caskets were visible. As a "raw wind swept across the plot," the crowd faced a platform draped with purple and black bunting and listened to a range of speeches recounting what happened during the summer of 1847 and expounding on the site's historic significance. This commemorative moment was indeed unique as it brought together Catholics and Protestants at a memorial site that had often kept Irish Catholic organizations at loggerheads with Anglican authorities. The newfound spirit of cooperation summoned by the ceremony even inspired the President of the Irish Protestant Benevolent Association, C.B. Brown, to present Emmett McManamy, President of the St. Patrick's Society, with a cheque for $500 as a gesture "marking their interest in the Re-Internment of the Ship Fever victims and…their goodwill for and towards their friends of St. Patrick's Society."[107]

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[106] *Montreal Gazette*, 31 October 1942.

[107] A.A. Gardiner to R.C. Johnston, 16 November 1942, LAC, RG 30, vol. 2077, file "Documents Regarding Monument at Point St. Charles, Montreal."

Such bridge building between Catholics and Protestants is illustrative of the extent to which perceptions of Irish ethnic identity in Montreal had changed since the last large-scale public ceremony at the site of the Ship Fever Monument almost thirty years earlier. By 1942, the historical contributions of the Irish in Montreal had become part of an Anglo-Canadian national narrative. In his correspondence to the AOH and St. Patrick's Society during the run-up to the 1942 ceremony, R.C. Johnston felt it fitting that the Irish as "pioneers who contributed so much to the early life of this country" be honoured for their contributions to the nation.[108] Taking a very different track than the GTR had a generation earlier, the CNR promised to "endeavour to preserve with respect and dignity their earthly resting place as a tribute to their memory" of "members of a large group who contributed so much to the pioneer life of this country."[109] These accolades bestowed by such a powerful national institution as the CNR indicate that by the time of the Second World War the patriotism of Montreal's Irish Catholics was increasingly irreproachable.

In speeches delivered during the re-interment ceremony Irish Catholics also cast themselves as Canadian pioneers and patriots. Dr. L.P. Nelligan, past president of St. Patrick's Society, urged those in attendance at the memorial site to look upon the plight of Famine refugees in 1847 as more than a tragedy: "their passing…has served to build a great nation where hatred and spite and bigotry have disappeared." Acknowledging that "Ireland is not in this war officially," Nelligan took great pride in pointing out that "the

[108] R.C. Johnston to J.L. Whitty, 9 Nov 1942; R.C. Johnston to Emmett McManamy, 9 Nov 1942, LAC, RG 30, vol. 2077, file "Documents Regarding Monument at Point St. Charles, Montreal."
[109] R.C. Johnston to Emmett McManamy, 9 November 1942, LAC, RG 30, vol. 2077, file "Documents Regarding Monument at Point St. Charles, Montreal."

Irish people are in it, fighting now as always that liberty may triumph, that men's souls may be free, that tyranny and oppression and hunger and fear, may, by God's help, no longer shadow the onward march of humanity."[110] Though there were Irish Catholics in 1942, including John Loye, the President of the United Irish Societies, who rejected the symbolism of empire and militarism, most Irish Catholics in the city were supportive of the war effort, willing to accept Canada's place in the British Commonwealth, and, as was made evident at the re-interment ceremony, prepared to use their past to reconstitute themselves as Canadian patriots in the present.[111]

The patriotic proclamations of Irish Canadians in 1942 must be considered in light of the fact that Ireland was the only member of the Commonwealth to remain neutral during the Second World War, a policy that led to considerable tension between Ireland and the allied powers. In 1942 Canada became entangled in its own contretemps with Ireland when the Irish government objected to the wording of the National Resources Mobilization Act, which categorized Irish citizens living in Canada as British subjects.[112] While the situation was quickly diffused when the Canadian government agreed to grant Irish citizens in Canada deferrals from military service, Ireland's political efforts to assert its independence during wartime did make for uneasy relations between these Commonwealth nations.

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[110] *Montreal Gazette*, 2 November 1942.
[111] *Montreal Gazette*, 16 March 1942.
[112] Fred McEvoy, "Canadian-Irish Relations during the Second World War," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 5, no. 2 (1977): 212-13.

Figure 2.12. High Commissioner for Ireland in Canada, John Hearne, addresses crowd during re-interment ceremony, November 20, 1942. Source: LAC, e007913791.

This did not prevent the High Commissioner for Ireland in Canada, John Hearne, who was at the centre of this diplomatic spat, from making an appearance at the re-interment ceremony in Montreal.[113] As a well-known advocate of restoring "the integrity of the whole national territory of Ireland," Hearne viewed the monument and gravesite from a somewhat different perspective than the Irish Canadian representatives with

[113] After helping to draft the new Constitution of Ireland, Hearne was appointed High Commissioner to Canada in 1937, a position he would fill until 1950, when he was named Irish Ambassador to the United States.

whom he shared the platform.[114] Looking down upon the open grave, he claimed those who died in 1847 as Ireland's own: "Out of this clay will speak forever a voice which calls across the ocean, as here today it calls to us across the century, telling of old suffering and old sacrifice." While avoiding making explicit reference to his aspirations for the reunification of north and south under an Irish republic, he did speak of "the great destiny of the race from which these men sprang," urging the crowd to "have no fears for the future of the people and the land from which these men came."[115] For both Hearne and the Irish Canadians who spoke at the re-interment ceremony, the graves of Irish immigrants in Pointe Saint-Charles symbolized the foundation upon which nationhood was constructed in the intervening century. However, unlike the Irish diplomat, who interpreted the sacrifices of Famine refugees as part of the historical journey taken to fulfill Ireland's national destiny, the representatives of local Irish organizations were more inclined to interpret the significance of the site in terms of the Irish contributions to Canadian national development.

While the 1942 re-interment ceremony revealed that Famine memory could be mobilized during wartime to serve different political goals for the Irish in Ireland and those in the Canadian Diaspora, this commemorative event, just like the ones organized in 1897 and 1913, offered new ways in which popular historical understanding of the Famine site could be revisited and represented. The event and the media coverage it received shone a light on a shadowy episode in the city's history, however fleetingly. Though living memory of the Famine had by 1942 expired, and few in attendance at the

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[114] *Montreal Gazette*, 16 March 1942.
[115] *Montreal Gazette*, 2 November 1942.

re-interment ceremony could have drawn clear familial connections to the site, vernacular memory of 1847 persisted almost a century after the Famine migrants arrived in Montreal.[116]

For John Loye, President of the United Irish Societies, the discovery of remains at the memorial site jogged memories of stories told to him by his grandmother, Margaret Dowling, who was a young witness to the arrival of Irish Famine refugees in Montreal. Loye recalled her describing a scene at the corner of Notre Dame and McGill streets: "a young Irish girl stood clad only in a nightgown and with a tin cup in her hand while a policeman was keeping the street clear of all pedestrians until means could be found to convey her back to the quarantine sheds." An even more unsettling anecdote survived the century to surface in 1942—told by a Mrs. Bergen to her friend Margaret Dowling, who then passed it down to her grandson, who finally relayed it to the *Montreal Gazette*. Stricken with typhus in 1847, Bergen "was believed dead and put in a coffin which was lowered in to the pit. Her husband, a quarantine subject rushed among the coffins and saw her skirt protruding through the lid of the coffin. He opened it to find she was still breathing." Such stories reportedly "gave rise to the belief that many of the victims were buried alive as the Government wished to dispose of them to make room for fresh cases."[117] Passed on within families and through larger community networks of Irish Catholics, this oral tradition, three generations in gestation, formed one of the narrative strands interwoven in the 1942 commemorative discourse. It is noteworthy, however, that

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[116] Guy Beiner explores the concept of living memory and the persistence of oral tradition in *Remembering the Year of the French: Irish Folk History and Social Memory* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2007).
[117] *The Montreal Gazette*, 4 August 1942.

such community memory did not find its way into the official historical narrative dispensed during the re-interment ceremony, which cast Montreal's host society in 1847 in a far more flattering light: "the people of Canada held out arms of mercy to [Irish migrants], brightening their last moments with the touch of warm sympathy."[118]

Conclusion

Even though participants in the 1942 ceremony at the Ship Fever Monument were ostensibly united in the twin tasks of re-interment and remembrance, a range of historical, cultural, and political meanings were ascribed to the memorial site, as was the case at the commemorations in 1897 and 1913. The 1942 event was thus another stage in the ongoing process of socially constructing the Ship Fever Monument site initiated over fifty years earlier. During this time, Irish Catholics in Montreal not only had to contend with changing, and sometimes conflicting, popular memories and political priorities vying for prominence within their own community, they were also forced to negotiate with systems of power brought to bear by the GTR, the CNR, Anglican authorities, and various levels of government. Given the number of competing interests at stake, it is not surprising that close to a century after the Famine migrants arrived in Montreal, the meaning of the monument marking their gravesite was still not set in stone.

One thing that Irish Catholics in the city could agree upon, though, was that the Ship Fever Monument was never quite what its Anglo-Protestant architects in 1859 had intended it to be: a simple gravestone marking the burial site of typhus victims of no

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[118] *The Montreal Gazette*, 2 November 1942.

particular national or religious identity. This certainly did not deter Irish Catholics in Montreal, especially those residing in the working class neighbourhoods below the hill, from taking a vested interest in the Pointe Saint-Charles burial grounds and, by extension, its memorial stone. While rarely looked upon with unbridled affection before the turn of the twentieth century, the Ship Fever Monument came to be seen by various groups of Irish Catholics as an object with a certain utility, as it directed attention to what was deemed a sacred Irish site and the pivotal historical event in the history of their community. Thus, in ways unintended by its makers, the monument became "an emblem of the Irish race," an artefact used by Irish Catholics to maintain memory of the Famine migration.[119] By 1942, the Ship Fever Monument's ownership, historical integrity, and placement had been fiercely contested and negotiated, but in the process Irish Catholics had succeeded in transforming it into the most evocative and cherished Irish historical landmark in Montreal.

How then did this boulder become imbued with so much meaning for Irish Catholics in the city, a diverse group for whom living memory of the Famine migration was remote? Their interest in the Famine site was no doubt driven in part by the urge to uncover a piece of their buried past and to reconnect with their increasingly indistinct Irish origins—an explanation that accords with Pierre Nora's conception of how monumental sites, what he called "les lieux de mémoire," were constructed to evoke a pre-modern past. Yet Famine memory was very much mediated by the conscious desire of Irish Catholics to assert themselves politically in Montreal. Declaring an historic site

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[119] *Montreal Gazette*, 18 August 1913.

significant in Montreal at the beginning of the twentieth century was, after all, a political act, one that, as Alan Gordon argues, conscripted "the past in defence of present power relationships."[120] In this context, the ceremonies and protests performed by Irish Catholics around the monument between 1897 and 1913 transformed the burial grounds in Pointe Saint-Charles into an ideologically charged site. The refusal of Anglican authorities to relinquish their role as trustees of the Ship Fever Monument and its removal by the GTR in 1900 provided the necessary impetus for Irish Catholics to position themselves as custodians of the site. By questioning the authenticity of the Famine burial grounds, the railway also ensured that the monument's desecration became part of the mythology attached to the memorial site, as Irish Catholics were determined that past transgressions against the Irish not be repeated in the present. The eventual homecoming of the monument to Pointe Saint-Charles allowed Irish Catholics to celebrate their success in preserving the integrity of the memorial site and to reflect upon the extent to which they and their Famine forebears had overcome adversity. By 1942, when the discovery of remains inspired another memorial event at the site, the Irish were far more integrated into Canadian society. Now in a better position to use the Ship Fever Monument to promote the pioneering contribution of the Irish to Canada's growth as a nation, Irish Catholic Montrealers were hopeful that invoking the memory of the Famine migration would lend them a certain political legitimacy in their city, despite Ireland's neutrality during the Second World War.

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[120] Gordon, *Making Public Pasts*, 168.

While Famine memory in Montreal was largely negotiated at a local political level, the commemorations at the Ship Fever Monument were also shaped by broader contexts of remembrance and identity. The GTR's removal of the monument in 1900 brought a certain ignominy to the memorial site, but in the process it garnered an unprecedented amount of interest from Irish Catholic newspapers and organizations across Canada. The 1909 commemoration on Grosse-Île also led Irish organizations in Canada and the United States to take more notice of the site in Pointe Saint-Charles, which ultimately worked as a catalyst for Montreal's Irish Catholics to lay claim to the Ship Fever Monument. This interest directed from the outside Irish world towards Montreal was reciprocal. Many Irish Catholics in Montreal kept abreast of the affairs of their counterparts throughout the diaspora and in Ireland, and were interested in drawing on shared historical experience to project an identity that was relevant beyond Canada's borders.

As in Liverpool, and in other diasporic centres, groups of Irish Catholics in Montreal in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century periodically remembered the Famine experience as a means of constructing identities and maintaining a meaningful sense of their Irish heritage. Considering the power and resiliency of Famine memory, it is essential to recognize that the struggle in Montreal to claim the Ship Fever Monument as a Famine memorial was more than a political exercise in manipulating the past to shape the present, or simply a consequence of the decline of traditional, unmediated forms of remembrance.[121] Amidst the politicking and posturing that went on around the

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[121] Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," in

memorial site in Pointe Saint-Charles, complex narratives about Irish immigration to the city were produced which reflected the historical perspectives of ordinary Irish Catholics, whose awareness of the Famine formed within the local community, as well as through national and diasporic associations across the century since 1847.

Historiography: Critical Concepts in Historical Studies ed., Robert M. Burns, 263-283 (New York: Routledge, 2006), 270, argues that "one unfortunate side effect of treating memory as a symptom of politics is the lack of explorations of power in areas that are not politically evident."

Chapter Three

Irish, have Mersey

> For the last 150 years these people have had no memorial.
>
> Ian McKeane, Secretary, GFCCL,
> 6 February 1998[1]

Unlike the Irish in Montreal, who overcame their ambivalence towards the Ship Fever Monument to lay claim to it as their memorial to 1847, the Liverpool Irish had no comparable site or stone anchoring memory of the Famine moment in place. The northern docklands—an area of the city most associated with the Famine influx, and one from which Irish Catholic political and parochial identities were reproduced at the turn of the century—underwent a profound transformation in the postwar decades. Following a trend established in the 1920s, many long-settled residents living in slum dwellings were relocated to new outlying estates, a development that further weakened the foundations of north end parish communities and Irish associational life. The city's brief respite from economic recession in 1950s and 1960s did offer some compensation for residential dislocation in the form of ample dock and factory work, opportunities that also enticed a new set of emigrants from Ireland. However, this Irish inflow dried up from the early 1970s when Liverpool entered a protracted period of post-industrial decline. As the economic crisis deepened, the escalation of the Northern Ireland conflict exacerbated

[1] Ian McKeane, interview, *Daybreak*, BBC Merseyside, 6 February 1998.

sectarian tensions in the city, giving the Liverpool Irish more reason to be reticent about proclaiming ethnic difference. Thus, as was the case during the interwar decades, for much of the latter half of the twentieth century there was little opportunity in Liverpool for the public representation of group memory of an Irish past, especially one as politically fraught as the Famine.

It was not until the mid-1990s that the Liverpool Irish were in a position to lay claim to urban memorial space and introduce the city to a new commemorative discourse about its Irish heritage, one featuring the Famine front and centre. Between the mid to late 1990s, the city's Irish community, represented by the Great Famine Commemoration Committee of Liverpool (GFCCL), oversaw the construction of a prominently placed Famine memorial (the first of its kind in Britain) and the installation of a series of plaques at various Famine sites around the city. There were also memorial church services, art installations, educational initiatives, public lectures, and radio documentaries dedicated to recollecting the Famine experience in Liverpool. Visitors and locals could even embark on guided tours of the Irish Great Hunger Heritage Trail. These late twentieth century commemorative acts—sermons, speeches, inscriptions, petitions, plaques, newsletters, and newspaper reports—produced a narrative of remembrance that finally integrated the Famine into the city's dominant historical discourse.

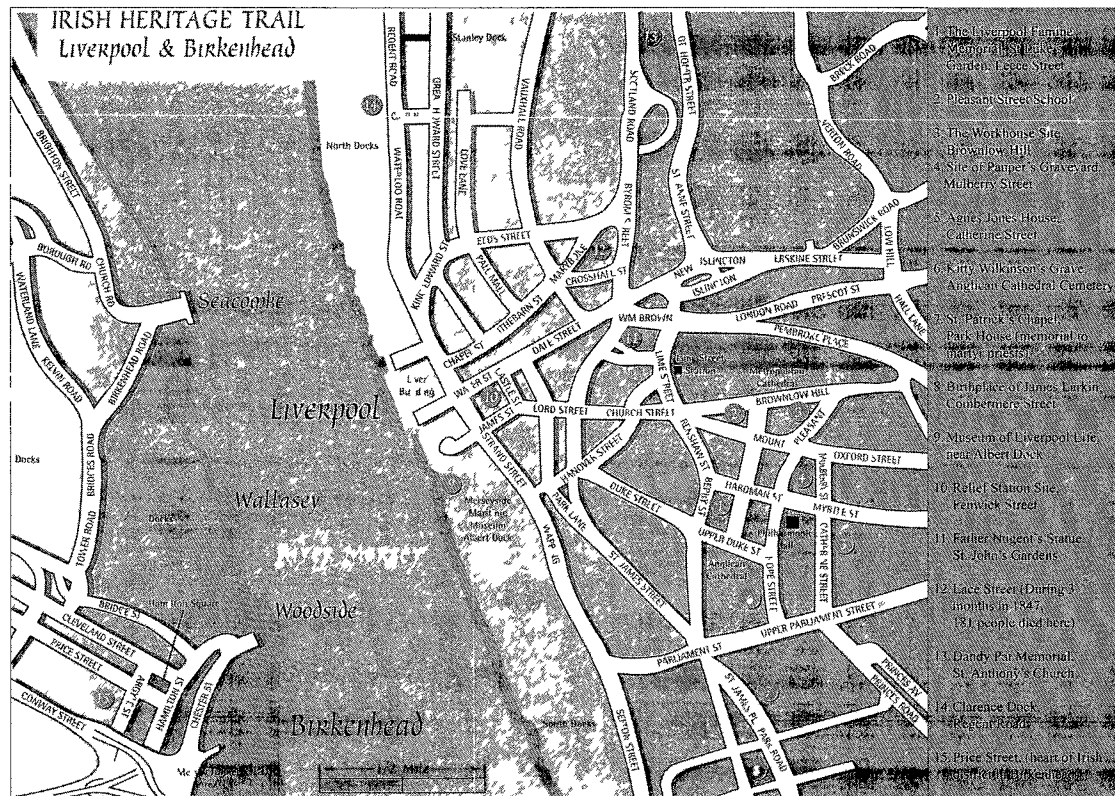
This commemorative coming out was made possible by a convergence of political will from Westminster to Áras an Uachtaráin (the Irish President's Dublin residence) and Irish points beyond. The Liverpool Irish, along with Irish groups in Montreal and other Irish centres in the diaspora, were invited to use the sesquicentenary to recall the Famine

as the traumatic, yet foundational, moment in their development as a diasporic community, a historical legacy with contemporary political applications. In the context of the peace process in Northern Ireland and Tony Blair's 1997 quasi-apology on behalf of his mid-nineteenth century predecessors, Famine memory in Liverpool could operate as a mechanism for reconciliation. Many of the city's sesquicentennial observances were also designed to inspire remedial action in parts of the globe stricken by poverty and hunger, an approach adopted by then Irish President Mary Robinson and her successor Mary McAleese, the two most influential advocates of Famine commemoration in Ireland and its diaspora. These commemorative outlooks, shaped by national and international political forces, projected an image of the Liverpool Irish as historical victims who had overcome adversity to become arbiters and exemplars of social justice and peace at home and abroad.

Yet Liverpool's acts of Famine remembrance were negotiated and contested in the realm of urban cultural politics, generating local Irish identities. In its attempt to organize an inclusive, citywide commemoration, with a prominent Famine monument as its centrepiece, the GFCCL not only had to raise and rehabilitate the profile of Liverpool's Irish history, demonstrating that the Famine migration was a seminal event in the city's evolution, it also had to persuade Liverpool City Council that an officially sanctioned Famine commemoration would conform to the city's new multicultural mandate rather than inflame the traditionally charged nationalist politics underpinning group memory of 'Black '47'. While the GFCCL was remarkably successful in eliciting significant governmental and popular support for Famine remembrance, and its non-

denominational, ecumenical approach to marking the sesquicentenary ultimately carried the day in Liverpool, Irish groups in the city did not all follow the same commemorative course. The GFCCL's proposed sesquicentennial plan was rejected by authorities at the city's Catholic Cathedral and circumvented by a group of Irish Catholics from St. Anthony's, the mother parish of the north end, which preferred to stage its own separate, Catholic commemoration as part of an ongoing Irish heritage project in the parish designed to highlight the role that Famine migrants and their descendents played in this particular Irish Catholic community. This recent process of negotiating Famine commemoration in the city revealed that the Liverpool Irish, more than ever, were a heterogeneous group that ascribed a range of political and cultural meanings to Liverpool's Famine past.

Focusing on the various contexts of remembrance from the local to the diasporic that influenced the sesquicentennial commemorations, this chapter explores the dynamics of the recent resurgence of Famine remembrance in Liverpool, examining the ways Irish groups in the city—historically accustomed to guarding against their stigmatization as the other—looked back to the Famine not only to honour the memory of those who died, but also as a means of identifying publicly with their Irish ethnicity and celebrating their historical contributions to the city.



Map 3.01. Liverpool Irish Heritage Trail. Source: Liverpool Tourist Information Centre.

Centennial Silence

The widespread popular and governmental memorial interest exhibited during the recent sesquicentennial season stands out against the general indifference that greeted the Famine's 100th anniversary—a commemorative ebb and flow over the latter half of the twentieth century not unique to Liverpool. Centennial observances were similarly subdued in Montreal (as discussed in the following chapter) and all of the urban centres throughout the Atlantic world where Famine migrants had left a lasting impression. Even in Ireland, where the state attempted to stimulate memorial interest in the Famine, initiating a process of folklore retrieval and commissioning a volume of academic essays

on the history of the catastrophe, few commemorative acts were organized to mark the centenary.[2]

Historians of the Irish at home and abroad have offered a range of explanations for this memorial ellipsis in the late 1940s. According to Peter Gray, the lack of commemorative interest at mid-century can be partly attributed to the fact that public memory of the Famine was sustained by textual sources, and thus "lacked the emotional resonances of other aspects of the nationalist canon as manifested in processions, pageants and public monuments."[3] Gray also points out that the Famine was popularly associated with "passivity and victimhood (and thus for many with what they regarded as femininity)," which drew militant Irish nationalists to historical memories that represented the "heroic masculine ideals of Irish militancy from the past."[4] The reluctance to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Famine has also been explained by the lack of Irish economic and cultural confidence required to confront such a catastrophe.[5] Other commentators have used the language of psychoanalysis—repressed

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[2] See R. McHugh, "The famine in folklore," in *The Great Famine: Studies in Irish History*, eds. R.D. Edwards and T.D. Williams (Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1956), 391-406. Cathal Póirtéir, *Famine Echoes* (Dublin: Gill & MacMillan, 1995) for analyses of Famine folklore. Cormac Ó Gráda, "Making History in Ireland in the 1940s and 1950s: the Saga of *The Great Irish Famine*," *Irish Studies Review* 12 (Spring/Summer 1992): 87-107, outlines the protracted process behind the production of this collection, which was meant to coincide with the centenary in 1945. In the early 1940s, then Irish Taoiseach, Eamon de Valera, commissioned Irish historians R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams to put together a commemorative volume on the Famine. In 1956, after over ten years of editorial delays, this collection of articles on a variety of subjects related to the Famine was finally published.
[3] Peter Gray, "Memory and the Commemoration of the Great Irish Famine," in *The Memory of Catastrophe*, eds. Peter Gray and Kendrick Oliver (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 50.
[4] Ibid., 49.
[5] Luke Dodd, "Famine Echoes," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 95, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 99.

memory and collective trauma—to explain the silence that marked the centennial.[6] Cormac Ó Gráda, who remains dubious of such claims to long-term communal suffering,[7] is more persuasive when he suggests that the general disinclination to organize centenary commemorations was due to the fact that the catastrophe had been "relegated to being a slogan and a taboo for generations."[8]

The Famine had indeed lost much of its power to inspire the Liverpool Irish since the passing of mainstream Irish nationalist politics in the city following the First World War and the subsequent rise of anti-Irish immigration sentiment in the interwar decades; however, the centennial silence must also be examined in the immediate postwar context. In 1947, Liverpool was still reeling from the Second World War, and the Famine calamity, one century removed, appeared as a relatively remote spectre of suffering, one that few Irish Liverpudlians were inclined to recall. As during the Great War, the Liverpool Irish, intent on demonstrating their commitment to defending Britain and their rejection of Irish republican tactics, had generally responded favourably to the call to arms.[9] On the home front, the shared privation of wartime and the trauma of the aerial

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[6] See Christine Kinealy, "The Great Irish Famine—A Dangerous Memory?" in *The Great Famine and the Irish Diaspora in America*, ed. Arthur Gribben (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 244, 252; Kevin Whelan, "The Cultural Effects of the Famine," in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture*, eds. Joe Cleary and Claire Connelly (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 139.
[7] See Cormac Ó Gráda, "Famine, Trauma, and Memory," Béaloideas*: Journal of the Folklore of Ireland* 69 (2001): 121-43.
[8] Cormac Ó Gráda, "The Great Famine and Today's Famine," in *The Great Irish Famine*, ed. Cathal Póirtiér (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1995), 249.
[9] The Irish writer Brendan Behan was arrested in Liverpool in 1939 as a young IRA operative plotting to blow up a battleship in Liverpool harbour. In his 1958 novel, *The Borstal Boy*, he recalls that local Irish Liverpudlians, intent on displaying to the host society their opposition to the republican cause, were the most vocal in their taunts and jeers as he was led away.

bombardment of the city, which obviously did not discriminate between English and Irish or Catholic and Protestant, drew Irish Liverpudlians closer in solidarity to the majority population, disarming those previously set on recalling the Famine migration as part of an anti-Irish immigration campaign.[10] Though the perception of the city's "Irish problem" that had been legitimized during the interwar period lingered, and Ireland's official neutrality still rankled, the loyalty of the Liverpool Irish was increasingly difficult to call into question. Moreover, the city's Protestant establishment, preoccupied by post-war reconstruction, and less focused on undermining the city's Catholic Labour caucus and keeping a new generation of Irish immigrants at bay, felt no need to reprise its interwar invocations of 1847. Thus, by the time of its centenary anniversary, the Famine no longer had the same potency—for antagonists and advocates of the Irish alike—as a symbol of the city's Irish genesis as it had a generation earlier.

The lack of commemorative interest in marking the Famine's 100th anniversary also had a lot to do with the decline of north end Irish Catholic parishes, Liverpool's traditional focal points of Irish community and commemoration. The docklands were particularly hard hit during the war, with bombs destroying several Irish Catholic churches, including St. Brigid's, St. Mary's, and Holy Cross.[11] The latter, known as the Famine church, which had organized an elaborate commemoration of its diamond jubilee

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[10] 4,000 Liverpudlians lost their lives and double that figure sustained serious injury during the war. Tens of thousands more were left homeless due to sustained bombing attacks on the city that left 6,585 homes and another 125,310 properties destroyed. See Jon Murden, "'City of Change and Challenge': Liverpool since 1945," in *Liverpool 800: Culture, Character, & History*, ed. John Belchem (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), 393.

[11] Frank Boyce, "Catholicism in Liverpool's Docklands: 1950s-1990s," in *Catholics in England, 1950-2000: Historical and Sociological Perspectives*, ed. Michael P. Hornsby-Smith (London: Cassell, 1999), 46-47.

a generation earlier (as discussed in chapter one), would have been the most likely venue for a centennial event had it not been destroyed during the May blitz of 1941.

Yet eight years after its edifice was left in ruins the Famine church managed to produce *The Story of Holy Cross*, a book designed to mark its 100th anniversary and to garner support for its restoration. This commemorative publication was the closest the city would come to observing the Famine centenary. The book describes Holy Cross's Famine-era origins, featuring an account of the plight of hungry, impoverished Irish newcomers to Liverpool forced to either huddle together in overcrowded cellars or enter the fever sheds. The Oblate Fathers of Holy Cross and ordinary Liverpudlians, "with a few ignoble exceptions," are credited for doing what they could to alleviate the suffering of the Irish.[12] The British government, however, is lambasted for failing "to supervise the 'coffin ships' which bore away the famine refugees," and for standing by as Famine appeared "at the door of the wealthiest nation in the world" and claimed more lives "than the British Empire lost in the four years of the First World War,"[13] The publication in 1949 of this commemorative volume indicates that the Famine was a catastrophic memory that remained integral to the identity of at least one group of Irish Catholics in Liverpool. However, this kind of narrative of remembrance had limited appeal. Its

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[12] Daniel Murray, *The Story of Holy Cross: a Centenary Handbook, 1849-1949* (Liverpool: J & C Moores Ltd., 1949), 5.
[13] Ibid., 5, 6.

recollection of the Famine ordeal was focused on galvanizing a particular Irish Catholic working class parish that was at risk of disintegrating.[14]

Irishness in Postwar Liverpool

The rest of Liverpool's north end Catholic churches were too busy dealing with the new phase of urban redevelopment that was pushing their parishioners out to the suburbs to be focused on maintaining Famine memory. During the 1950s, many residents of Great Homer Street and Scotland Road were uprooted by the massive construction project that transformed Scotland Road into a multi-lane highway leading to the second Mersey tunnel.[15] Even more significant was the city's subsequent enforcement of new standards of health and housing that led to the relocation of many inhabitants of the northern docklands to housing estates on the outskirts of Liverpool. Over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, City Council followed through with a clearance scheme that demolished 78,000 dwellings, 60,000 of them inner-city slums deemed uninhabitable due to structural damage or sub-standard conditions.[16] Though this round of clearances and re-housing in the postwar decades offered many long-time residents of the north end new suburban dwellings that were more spacious and sanitary, established Irish family and neighbourhood networks were damaged in the process.

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[14] The new Holy Cross Church was built in 1954 and continued to serve its parishioners, albeit in ever diminishing numbers, until September 2001 when it was removed from sacred use. See *Scottie Press*, October 2001.

[15] Terry Cooke, *Scotland Road: 'The Old Neighbourhood'* (Birkenhead: Countyvise Limited, 1987), 13.

[16] Murden, "'City of Change and Challenge,'" 397-399.

This mass dispersal destabilized community for those who left as well as for those who stayed behind. The postwar tradition of the Scotland Road parades on St. Patrick's Day, an annual event intended to maintain "the area's historic links with Ireland and the development of the Irish community," lapsed by the mid-1960s due to the diminished concentration of Irish residents in the area and the "ill-feeling between local Catholics and Protestants" that it tended to arouse.[17] Maintaining a sense of cohesion in the new suburban estates, where newcomers often experienced a sense of alienation, was also difficult, especially as ethnic and religious fault lines were easily exposed when previously isolated elements of the city's working class were suddenly thrust together as neighbours.[18]

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[17] *Liverpool Echo*, 14 March 2005. Mary Roberts, an 85-year-old resident in the Scotland road area, recalls celebrating St. Patrick's Day in the 1950s: "the girls would wear green velvet cloaks and the boys had feathers in their caps. And people would go and collect shamrocks from ships on the Mersey and distribute them to children in local schools." In 2005, fifty years after the tradition had died out, the Scotland Road parade returned, an event that organizer Maureen Price hoped would "attract as many people as possible...regardless of their age, sex, colour or creed and whether or not they have any family links with Ireland." This community based event was an alternative to a citywide St. Patrick's Day parade, which after several failed attempts over the preceding decade had failed to establish a lasting tradition. In 2001 and 2002 City Council withheld funding from the fledgling parade because of the republican political agenda of its organizers— ALIVE (A Liverpool Irish Voices Enterprise)—and some of its participants, including the James Larkin Republican Flute Band, self-described supporters of a 32-county socialist republic in Ireland. Though ALIVE (also the driving force behind the movement to construct a new Irish Centre in the city) presented itself as a non-sectarian, non-political, and non-religious organization, it was well known that its treasurer, Patrick McDonnell, had been a member of Republican Sinn Féin, the political wing of the continuity IRA that had opted out of the Northern Ireland ceasefire. See *Liverpool Echo*, 27 February, 18 March, and 25 April 2002.
[18] C. Vereker and J. B. Mays, *Urban Redevelopment and Social Change* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1961), 79. A 1956 sociological study of Liverpool revealed that the re-housing of Catholic Irish groups from the dockland slums to the neighbourhood of Abercromby in the city's north west generated "hostility between residents on racial and religious and even on cultural grounds."

Yet some of these anxieties and animosities were assuaged by the city's postwar economic resurgence. By the mid-1950s dock work had returned, as shipping, transport, and distribution again became essential to the city's economy. But the most promising aspect of Liverpool's postwar recovery was its newfound economic diversification. Municipal and central governments managed over the course of the 1950s to attract large corporations to the city, breathing life into its moribund manufacturing sector, which before the war had accounted for only one third of employment.[19] Facilities formerly used for armament production, many of them located on the city's outskirts, were retooled for the manufacture of a range of products from rubber tires and sports equipment to electrical goods and chemicals. Growth in the new factory based economy accelerated from the early 1960s when the city's automobile industry set up operations within commuting distance of the massive suburban council estates of Kirkby, Halewood, and Speke.[20] As the rate of unemployment dipped to five percent in the mid-1960s,[21] Irish emigrants—still Merseyside's largest migrant group—once again made the leap to Liverpool.[22] Though the city's Irish population, by birth and descent, still formed a

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[19] Murden, "'City of Change and Challenge,'" 404-408.
[20] Trevor Cornfoot, "The Economy of Merseyside, 1945-1982: Quickening Decline or Post-Industrial Change?" in *The Resources of Merseyside*, eds. William T.S. Gould and Alan G. Hodgkiss (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1982), 16.
[21] Murden, "'City of Change and Challenge,'" 409.
[22] Between 1966 and 1971 2,670 immigrants from Ireland arrived in Merseyside. See Richard Lawton, "The distribution and Structure of Population Since 1951," in *The Resources of Merseyside*, eds. William T.S. Gould and Alan G. Hodgkiss (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1982), 152. At the time of the 1961 and 1966 censuses there were approximately 16,000 people born in Ireland and another 8,000 born in Northern Ireland living in Merseyside. See Kathleen G. Pickett, "Migration in the Merseyside Area," in *Merseyside: Social and Economic Studies*, eds. Richard Lawton and Catherine M. Cunningham (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1970), 119.

significant contingent of the city's unskilled working-class that remained vulnerable to poverty, some benefitted from the city's brief brush with affluence from the early 1950s to the mid-1960s.[23]

In these propitious economic circumstances, Irishness was more easily integrated into popular Liverpool identities, most notably in the form of the scouser, a figure that John Belchem describes as "the quintessential Liverpudlian."[24] The archetypal scouser was the Irish "slummy" of the north end, a rough and resourceful character whose Celtic proclivity to violence was offset by a mischievous Irish sense of humour—an ironic, retrograde representation given the growing number of Liverpudlians of Irish descent experiencing residential mobility and skilled employment. More than an urban identity with strong Irish affinities, scouse was the city's working class accent, one with unmistakable Irish overtones that gave voice to claims of Irish belonging and legitimacy in Liverpool.[25] Though frequently the butt of jokes, postwar scousers were also often cast in a favourable light on the stage, in comedy halls, and on radio and television.[26] These popular cultural constructions of scouseness projected a vaguely affectionate form of Irishness—less parochial and provocative than Irish identities historically generated through Famine remembrance—that was incorporated into the city's dominant culture.

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[23] Selina Todd, "Affluence, Class and Crown Street: Reinvestigating the Post-War Working Class," *Contemporary British History* 22, no. 4 (December 2008): 501–518.
[24] John Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse: the History of the Liverpool-Irish, 1800-1939* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 322. The term is derived from lobscouse (sailors' or Irish stew), a traditional dietary staple in the city's north end.
[25] At the time of Liverpool's 700th anniversary in 1907, Dixon Scott, *Liverpool 1907*, 38-39, attributed the "bastard brogue" that could be heard in the city's slums to their Irish denizens.
[26] John Belchem, *Merseypride: Essays in Liverpool Exceptionalism* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 52-58.

However, as Liverpool's brief and belated ride on the second wave of industrialization came crashing down by the late 1960s, it was increasingly difficult for the Liverpool Irish to maintain a favourable public profile.[27] The onset of the international recession, the new mode of containerizing transatlantic cargo, and the redirection of trade away from the Atlantic towards the European Economic Community nearly sank the city's shipping industry.[28] At the same time, the manufacturing sector was dealt a severe blow as hundreds of factories, many of them owned by national and multinational firms, closed shop or shipped out.[29] By the late 1970s, Liverpool's twenty percent unemployment rate was Britain's highest, leading one commentator to compare the scourge of joblessness in the city to "some kind of Black Death."[30] Jobs were particularly scarce for those living in the new suburbs of Speke and Kirkby and in the already beleaguered Irish Catholic communities of the north docks, where close to half the population was out of work.[31] As industrial relations deteriorated, Liverpool's dockers and factory workers gained a national reputation as militant scousers who were quick to gripe and resort to the dole—"un-English" behaviour that, as John Belchem points out, was often attributed to the city's Irish inheritance.[32]

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[27] See Philip Boland, "The Construction of Images of People and Place: Labelling Liverpool and Stereotyping Scousers," *Cities* 25, no. 6 (December 2008): 355-369.
[28] See Tony Lane, *Liverpool: City by the Sea* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), 133-134.
[29] Murden, "'City of Change and Challenge,'" 431.
[30] Frank Field, "Liverpool's Nightmare," *London Review of Books* 7, no. 22 (19 December 1985): 3-5.
[31] See Michael Hayes, *Unemployment in Liverpool. Vol. I: Unemployment Changes, 1982-1985* (Liverpool: Liverpool City Council, 1985).
[32] Belchem, *Merseypride*, 55.

Stereotypes of Irish disloyalty and criminality also became more pronounced in Liverpool with the conflict in Northern Ireland beginning in 1968 and the IRA mainland campaigns of the early 1970s.[33] While the Irish had become more integrated into the city's economic and political mainstream since mid-century and were not subject to the blatant forms discrimination directed towards many New Commonwealth immigrants and members of the city's long-settled Black community,[34] against the backdrop of the Northern Ireland conflict the Liverpool Irish were identified as a potentially threatening group. By 1974, the Prevention of Terrorism Act served as an official disincentive to all British residents, particularly those of Irish birth or descent, to challenge state policy in Northern Ireland, to express sympathy with nationalist views, or even to identify too fervidly with their Irish origins.[35] Over the next twenty years, as the conflict in Northern Ireland persisted, the political atmosphere in Liverpool, in the words of one Northern Irish-born resident, "put a lot of people on the back foot, holding back on Irish

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[33] See Paddy Hillyard, *Suspect Community: People's Experience of the Prevention of Terrorism Acts in Britain* (London; Pluto Press, 1993); and Paddy Hillyard, "Irish People and the British Criminal Justice System," *Journal of Law and Society* 211 (1994): 39-56.
[34] In July 1981 gathering racial and class tensions came to a head in Toxteth, an impoverished area of south central Liverpool with a large black and mixed-race population, when police officers were accused of wrongfully arresting a 20-year old black man from the area. The initial riot sparked a series of violent exchanges between groups of local youths and members of the Merseyside police force, resulting in hundreds of injuries and extensive damage. When the dust settled, city authorities were forced to begin investigating police harassment, institutionalized racism, chronic unemployment, inadequate housing, and poor education in the area.
[35] Bronwen Walter, Sarah Morgan, Mary J. Hickman, and Joseph M. Bradley, "Family Stories, Public Silence: Irish identity Construction amongst the Second-generation Irish in England," *Scottish Geographical Journal* 118, no. 3 (2002): 202.

identity."[36] In this context, there were few opportunities for the Liverpool Irish to represent their cultural heritage or group memory in the city's public sphere.

The expressions of Irishness in Liverpool that remained in public view in the 1970s and 1980s were generally limited to activities promoting Irish traditional culture and sport. Since the demise of nationalist political organizations and the diminished role of the parish as the fulcrum of community, Liverpool's Irish associational culture had contracted considerably.[37] However, by the 1970s, Merseyside could still claim three branches of the Gaelic League, a Gaelic Athletic Association Club, the Shamrock Club, and the St. Patrick's Day Banquet Society, which hosted an annual event in the Adelphi Hotel.[38] The inauguration of the Irish Centre in 1965 was also a significant demonstration of the city's Irish presence, even as Irish immigrants were increasingly choosing London over Liverpool.[39] For twenty-five years the Centre on Mount Pleasant operated as a venue for Irish social and cultural events, including ballad nights, plays, dances, and concerts with visiting Irish show bands.[40] However, in economic and ideological circumstances that were less than conducive to public displays of Irish nationality, associational activities were geared towards maintaining an Irish social milieu in Liverpool rather than

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[36] Greg Quiery, interview by author, Liverpool, UK, 12 June 2006.
[37] Belchem, *Irish, Catholic, and Scouse*, 320.
[38] *Irish Centre Silver Jubilee Souvenir Brochure*, 2.
[39] Enda Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 95, points out that the relative abundance of work in London made it a far more attractive destination for Irish newcomers in the latter half of the twentieth century compared to Liverpool, Glasgow, and Manchester—the other major British centres of Irish settlement in the nineteenth century.
[40] *Irish Centre Silver Jubilee Souvenir Brochure*, 32. The Mount Pleasant building, completed in 1815, operated for much of the nineteenth century as the Wellington Club, an exclusive social venue and ballroom for the merchant elite of Liverpool residing in the area of Rodney Street and Faulkner Square.

commemorating the city's Irish antecedents, including its pivotal role in the Famine migration—a politically contentious undertaking at the best of times.

The few efforts to expose the city's Irish Famine roots were made within works of heritage literature, including various autobiographies, oral history projects, and local histories published from the 1970s.[41] Several of these reconstructions of Liverpool's old Irish Catholic strongholds in the northern wards of Scotland, Vauxhall, Everton, and Kirkdale refer to the great impact that Irish Famine migrants had on Liverpool, but the amount of public attention they brought to bear on the Famine was minimal due to their limited readership. As much as this recent rise in production of north end heritage literature projected an image of the former vitality of the city's traditional Irish Catholic enclave, it confirmed how few visible vestiges of the city's Irish heritage remained in Liverpool at the end of the twentieth century.

Until recently, very little of the city's space had been designated to inscribing Irish history in the official record of Liverpool's public life, with the exception of a handful of memorials to Irish Catholic philanthropists, most notably the monument to Father Nugent in St. John's Garden.[42] An illustrated companion guide to the city

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[41] See Frank Shaw, *My Liverpool* (Liverpool: Wolfe Publishing Ltd., 1971); Pat Ayers, *The Liverpool Docklands: Life and Work in Athol Street* (Liverpool: Liver Press, 1999); Terry Cooke, *Scotland Road: 'The Old Neighbourhood'*; and Jack Robinson, *Teardrops on my Drum* (London: GMP, 1986).

[42] The commemorative statue of Father Nugent, unveiled in the city centre in 1906, stood out for much of the twentieth century as the city's only prominent monument to an Irish Catholic. There was a memorial in Scotland Place honouring another late nineteenth century Irish public figure, "Dandy" Patrick Byrne, publican and popular nationalist councillor. However, it was moved and later misplaced following the construction of the second Mersey tunnel in the late 1960s. The remains of the monument were eventually recovered and in 1998 installed in the grounds of St Anthony's Church. There are also memorials on the Anglican Cathedral grounds recognizing the

published by Liverpool City Council as recently as twenty years ago serves as a reminder of this longstanding absence. While there is one fleeting reference to the city's "Celtic inheritance," no mention is made of the Irish or of their arrival en masse during the Famine. Underlining the heritage industry's abiding interest in Liverpool's mercantile past, the guide showcases the city's many architectural gems and grand sculptures and monuments that evoke its golden age of commercial prosperity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[43] This picture of the city's heritage in many ways accurately reproduces Liverpool's memorial landscape as it appeared in 1990.[44] Even after a decade of investing heavily in its heritage industry in an effort to reverse the city's failing economic fortunes, Liverpool's heritage initiatives continued to be directed towards preserving and promoting the historical buildings, artefacts, and legacies from its heyday as an international trading port, leaving no room for the more negative images associated with the arrival of Irish Famine migrants and the typhus epidemic of 1847.

Remembrance and Reconciliation

However, by the mid-1990s, Liverpool began to tell a different story about its past, one featuring a public historical narrative recalling the flood of Irish migrants during the Famine and the profound historical influence that their arrival had in shaping the city.

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contributions of two Irish caregivers, Kitty Wilkinson and Agnes Jones from Donegal, who died of typhus in 1868 while attending to inmates at the Brownlow Hill workhouse.

[43] *Liverpool Heritage Walk: an Illustrated Companion Guide* (Liverpool: Liverpool City Council Publication, 1990).

[44] Albert Dock was transformed into a shopping and leisure district, and several museums were opened on the waterfront, including The Merseyside Maritime Museum (1980), The Museum of Liverpool Life (1993), The Custom and Excise Museum (1994). In 2004, Liverpool's waterfront was made a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

City authorities' newfound acquiescence to celebrating Liverpool's cosmopolitan past and its multicultural heritage presented Irish groups with the opportunity to claim urban memorial space to commemorate the forthcoming Famine sesquicentenary. Significantly, the Irish were not the only group at the time turning to public historical representations to contest Liverpool's hegemonic heritage narratives. The impending bicentenary of the abolition of the British slave trade in 2007, inspired some Liverpudlians of African descent to lobby the city to finally own up to the horrific consequences of its slave trading past. These efforts to integrate the two most painful chapters of Liverpool's past into its heritage narrative ensured that the commemoration of historical trauma emerged as a potent political force in the city. By 1994, just as the city was inaugurating a slavery exhibition at the Maritime Museum, conditions had never been more conducive for Irish groups to launch a campaign to raise a Famine memorial in the city.[45]

Most of the Famine commemorative events and activities that took place in the last years of the twentieth century were initiated by or organized in conjunction with the Great Famine Commemoration Committee of Liverpool (GFCCL), "an umbrella group with membership drawn from the principal Irish community groups and organisations in

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[45] The various projects undertaken over the last fifteen years to recall Liverpool's role in the slave trade and the Famine migration have formed a vital part of the city's heritage industry, most recently bolstered by the celebration of Liverpool's 800th anniversary in 2007 and its tenure the following year as the European Capital of Culture. However, the tragedies of the slave trade and the Famine are trumped by the Beatles—the city's main heritage attraction, which pumps £20 million into the local economy annually. See P. Du Noyer, *Liverpool: Wondrous Place, Music from the Cavern to the Coral* (London: Virgin Books , 2004), 18. The power of the band's brand in Liverpool is apparent from the moment one arrives at John Lennon Airport, after which it is hard to miss the city's many Beatles' sites, including magical mystery tours of the mop tops' childhood haunts, the Hard Days Night Hotel near the Cavern Club, and the Beatles' Story Museum on Albert Dock.

Liverpool."[46] Founded by its Chair, Greg Quiery, an immigrant from Northern Ireland, and its Secretary, Ian McKeane, whose great grandparents left County Tyrone, Ireland for Liverpool in 1852,[47] the GFCCL had a dozen core members, with as many as thirty on the periphery, almost all of whom were second, third, or fourth generation Irish.[48] Informal discussions had taken place within the Irish community about the need to recognize the importance of the Famine migration in the city's history since the late 1980s, but it was not until 1994 that the GFCCL took shape when an open meeting brought together representatives from the largest Irish organizations in the city.[49] From its inception, the Famine Committee made it clear that it was a "non-sectarian and non-political" group, whose primary goal was to oversee the design and construction of a substantial and lasting monument in the city centre that would memorialize the Famine and the historical experiences of Liverpool during the Famine years.[50]

However, a considerable amount of fundraising and political lobbying would be necessary before such a monument could be built. The Famine Committee recognized that it would have to raise media interest in and public awareness of the historical episode

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[46] The Great Famine Commemoration Committee (Liverpool), *Newsletter*, December 1995, 1, Ian McKeane's Papers, Liverpool, UK (hereafter cited as McKeane Papers).
[47] Dr. Ian McKeane works part-time as Academic Liaison Officer at the Institute of Irish Studies at the University of Liverpool, where he received his MA and PhD in Irish history. His research interests include Irish independence and Irish migration into and through Liverpool.
[48] Another key figure in the GFCCL, Frank McIver, interview by author, Liverpool, UK, 12 June 2006, was motivated by family connections to commemorate the Famine. His great grandmother, who he remembers from his childhood, was born in Mayo during the Famine and entered Liverpool with her family in 1851.
[49] Greg Quiery, interview by author, Liverpool, UK, 12 June 2006.
[50] The Great Famine Commemoration Committee, *Nuacht (Newsletter)*, 1996, 2, McKeane Papers.

that it was attempting to commemorate.[51] In 1995, the GFCCL introduced an arts and education initiative that included an historical exhibition outlining the progress of the Great Famine and its effects on Liverpool that was on display at various Liverpool libraries, churches, and at meetings of local history groups.[52] The following year, the committee also helped bring the Dublin artists Felicity Clear and Clea van der Grijn to Liverpool to exhibit *The Black Room* an art installation that "evoked the tragedy of the Great Famine in image and sound" and conduct art education workshops at the City Arts Centre. [53] To supplement the historical information on display at these exhibitions, Ian McKeane distributed a pamphlet outlining the effects that the Famine had on Liverpool in the mid-nineteenth century, while other members of the GFCCL ran information stalls at various Irish events in the region, including the Irish Studies Conference at Manchester Town Hall and the Famine conference at the Liverpool Bluecoat School.[54]

The GFCCL also invited Irish historians Christine Kinealy, Frank Neal, Cormac Ó Gráda, and Peter Gray, as well as two curators of Famine museums in Ireland to contribute to an ongoing free lecture series at the University of Liverpool's Institute of Irish Studies.[55] These scholars presented a variety of historical perspectives on a range of

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[51] The GFCCL's first order of business was to register as a charity and appoint trustees.

[52] The Great Famine Commemoration Committee, "From Material used in Various Info Sheets and Bid Documents 1995/1996," McKeane Papers.

[53] The Great Famine Commemoration Committee, *Nuacht (Newsletter)*, June 1996, 1, McKeane Papers. The Installation was later shown in Dublin and New York.

[54] Ian McKeane, "The Great Irish Famine of 1845-52 and its Effects on Liverpool: a Fact Sheet, 1996," McKeane Papers. Three years later McKeane followed this up with "Learpholl agus an Gorta Mór (Liverpool and the Great Famine), 1999," McKeane Papers—a more detailed exposition on the causes and consequences of the Famine.

[55] The Institute of Irish Studies was founded in 1988, following recommendations made as part of the 1985 Anglo-Irish agreement for the establishment of an academic institute devoted to Irish

topics, including British press coverage of the catastrophe, Ulster before and during the Famine, and living conditions in Liverpool's Irish quarters in the 1840s. In addition to stimulating historical interest in the Famine, the lecture series was considered a success by the Famine Committee because it "provided a way of meeting a substantial public" and was "helpful in facilitating networking with local contacts in positions of influence in the City."[56] It also presented a public forum for the exploration of ways in which the Famine past might offer lessons applicable in the present.

While professional historians delivered the bulk of the public lectures, the inclusion of several speakers who provided commentary on the contemporary plight of those suffering from Famine and injustice reveals that the GFCCL was also intent on extending the commemorative gaze beyond the events in Ireland and Liverpool 150 years earlier. Focusing on famine in Liberia, Tim Allen of the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) spoke at the Institute of Irish Studies in March 1996 on the need to parley historical understanding of the Great Irish Famine into concerted action to end suffering in the world at the end of the twentieth century.[57] This talk generated enough

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studies. Over the course of the 1990s the institute presented itself as a key venue for fostering dialogue and understanding between the people of Britain and Ireland, work for which the institute's director and professor of Irish history, Marianne Elliott, was awarded an Order of the British Empire. The institute has also benefited from associations with other notable historians of the Irish, including John Belchem, Pro-Vice Chancellor and Professor of History at the University of Liverpool, and Donald Akenson, who was Beamish Research Professor at the Institute from 1998 to 2002. In the summer of 2007, before the Celtic Tiger beat its rapid retreat, the Irish government created a £5 million Tony Blair Chair in Irish Studies at the University of Liverpool, in recognition of the former Prime Minister's efforts to broker peace in Northern Ireland.

[56] Ian McKeane, letter to author, 20 March 2006.

[57] The Catholic Agency for Overseas Development is a British based Catholic agency focused on finding social justice for the poor, marginalized, or oppressed.

interest from the GFCCL that two months later it helped organize an event with CAFOD called *On Waves of Hope* designed "to highlight the twin scourges of Famine and Flight."[58] This was an ecumenical commemorative event that began with a short service at the waterfront and continued with a Mersey Ferry cruise. The cruise, which featured Irish musical performances, also presented three hundred people the chance to meet with various experts on the Great Famine, including the Irish historian Christine Kinealy who gave an impromptu talk about the dietary staple of the Famine Irish. At the river mouth, participants were invited to drop a flower into the river and remember the horrors of famine in the past as well as its persistence in the present. This blend of social activism and historical awareness that came together on the Mersey was a prominent theme in all subsequent commemorations in Liverpool.

Another activist who participated in the GFCCL's lecture series and advanced this commemorative cause was Gary White Deer, member of the Oklahoma-based Choctaw Indian tribe, artist, and co-founder of CAIT (Celts and American Indians Together), an organization that raises money for famine relief. White Deer was invited to Liverpool to tell the remarkable story of the Choctaw's effort to relieve the suffering in Ireland during the Famine. Although still reeling from their forced relocation in 1831, the Choctaw tribe managed to raise $710 for distribution among the people of Doolough in County Mayo. White Deer's description of this historical bond between the Irish and Native Americans—two groups that he saw as sharing the pain of colonialism and dislocation—

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[58] The Great Famine Commemoration Committee (Liverpool), *Nuacht (Newsletter)*, June 1996, 2, McKeane Papers.

and his advocacy for famine relief struck a chord with those in Liverpool eager to use Famine memory to "provide a focus for reflection on…the continuing scourge of famine in the world today."[59]

Liverpool's Famine Committee's attempt to use collective memory of the Famine to raise awareness of contemporary inequity and distress was a commemorative perspective most notably championed by then Irish president, Mary Robinson.[60] In May 1993, three years before White Deer's arrival in Liverpool, Robinson visited Oklahoma to express her gratitude to the Choctaw Nation for its act of generosity and to promote efforts to "reach out…to countries that suffer from poverty and hunger."[61] This was one of the many trips she took during her Presidency in an effort to raise awareness of contemporary famine and to reach out to the Irish diaspora. Robinson's efforts to extract applicable lessons from Famine memory were instrumental in shaping sesquicentennial commemorations at sites across the Irish diaspora, including Montreal, Grosse-Île, Boston, New York, and Sydney. Although there were many in the diaspora unwilling to completely suppress pronouncements of British culpability for the Famine from their commemorations, her vision of a globally aware, and morally responsible Irish diaspora, mining its collective memory as a resource in the fight against contemporary deprivation, resonated with Irish communities around the world. Commemorators in Liverpool

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[59] Ian McKeane, *The Catholic Pictorial*, December 1996, 21.
[60] Mary Robinson went on to serve as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights from 1997 to 2002.
[61] Mary Robinson quoted in "President of Ireland Mary Robinson Addresses the Choctaw People," *Bishinik, The Official Publication of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma*, June 1995, http://www.uwm.edu/~michael/choctaw/robinson.html (accessed May 2006).

eagerly endorsed Robinson's message and indicated that Irish nationalist interpretations of the Famine would not feature prominently in their memorial events and activities. Opting for Robinson's commemorative approach would prescribe a new Irish identity that was ecumenical, progressive, and both locally and globally relevant.

Robinson not only helped shape the commemorative discourse in Liverpool; her support, and that of the Irish government, for the city's commemorations raised awareness of Liverpool's Irish history, lending the GFCCL much needed credibility. Although there were Famine events and lectures held in various parts of Britain during the 1990s, Irish governmental support of the Famine Committee helped establish Liverpool as the representative British site of Famine remembrance.[62] By mid-1995, the GFCCL, recognizing the importance of eliciting support from Robinson, sent Frank McIver, a member of the Liverpool Committee, to meet the Irish President in her Phoenix Park residence and present her with a letter of invitation to the monument's dedication ceremony slated for 1997. After showing McIver the light she kept burning in a western window of Áras an Uachtaráin to welcome the diaspora home, Robinson was reportedly

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[62] Two other Famine memorials were constructed in Britain around this time; however, neither aroused the same kind of commemorative interest nationally or internationally as did the Liverpool monument. In Cardiff, Wales the Famine sesquicentenary was commemorated with the unveiling of a limestone Cross in Cathays Cemetery on 17 March 1999. Two years later, another Famine memorial in the form of a Celtic Cross was inaugurated at Carfin Grotto in Lanarkshire, just outside Glasgow. Taoiseach Bertie Ahern was scheduled to be at the dedication ceremony on 11 February 2001, but his trip was cancelled at the last moment, as the ceremony fell on the same day as a Celtic and Rangers football match and there was fear that sectarian violence might mar the event. Four months later Ahern managed to finally visit the commemorative site.

"very receptive" to the GFCCL's commemorative undertaking and promptly offered an expression of support from her Office.[63]

A few months following this meeting, members of the Dáil (Ireland's Parliament) raised the issue of contributing funds to the Famine memorial in Liverpool, which was estimated to cost £30,000.[64] Irish TD Noel Treacy, pointed to the "great bond between Irish people and the people of Liverpool where many third and fourth generation Irish families live," stressing that "it is important that an event is held in Liverpool where, at the Merseyside docks, many of those who sailed in the dreadful coffin ships from Cobh were supposed to transfer to other ships which were to take them to the United States."[65] Avril Doyle, Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach, responded to Treacy's suggestion by noting that she had received a request from the GFCCL for funding and was keen on offering Irish assistance to the Liverpool memorial venture: "I wish to bring this one step forward, perhaps to have a joint Government commemoration, ecumenical service, concert or similar function and Liverpool may be the right place to have it."[66] Though a collaborative commemoration seemed unlikely, Doyle did manage to come up with £5000 for the GFCCL. Moreover, it was clear that Irish governmental support for Liverpool's commemorative project was not merely fiscal, as demonstrated by Doyle's attendance of a performance of the Famine Suite: *Flight from the Hungry land* by the

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[63] Frank McIver, interview by author, Liverpool, UK, 12 June 2006. A few days later, Greg Quiery received a phone call from the Taoiseach's office with the promise of a £5,000 start-up fund.
[64] Ian McKeane, *The Catholic Pictorial*, December 1996, 21.
[65] Dáil Éireann, "150th Anniversary of the Famine: Statements." Vol. 456, 5 October 1995, http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/ (accessed 5 September 2008).
[66] Dáil Éireann, "150th Anniversary of the Famine: Statements (Resumed)." Vol. 456, 5 October 1995, http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/ (accessed 5 September 2008).

RTE orchestra at the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall and Mary Robinson's acceptance of "an invitation in principle to visit Liverpool to unveil the monument in the summer of 1997."[67]

While securing the cooperation and support of the Irish government had been achieved with relative ease, persuading the British government to endorse the Liverpool commemorations proved a far greater challenge. Lobbying began in April 1995, when Robert Parry, Labour M.P. for the traditionally Irish riding of Liverpool, Riverside (Vauxhall), delivered an Early Day Motion to the House of Commons that garnered 158 signatures. Parry asked the House to remember that "1995 marks the anniversary of the great famine…which devastated Ireland.…and led to hundreds of thousands of Irish people flooding into [Liverpool]." In light of "the great cultural and historical connections between Ireland and Liverpool," Parry expressed his hope that "the year [would] not pass without some action by both governments or government agencies to record this historic event."[68] Although the GFCCL was quick to see Parry's proposal as "one of the first public commemorations in the United Kingdom of the Great Famine,"[69] it failed to generate funding for the Liverpool memorial or a declaration of support from the British Conservative government under John Major, despite the sustained efforts of

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[67] The Great Famine Commemoration Committee (Liverpool), *Nuacht (Newsletter)*, February 1997, 2, McKeane Papers; The Great Famine Commemoration Committee (Liverpool), *Nuacht (Newsletter)*, June 1996, 1, McKeane Papers.
[68] Robert Parry, M.P. for Liverpool-Riverside, Early Day Motion 967, 4 April 1995, http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=11090&SESSION=698 (accessed May 2007).
[69] The Great Famine Commemoration Committee, *Nuacht (Newsletter)*, June 1996, 2-3, McKeane Papers.

MPs Kevin McNamara and Louise Ellman in 1996 and early 1997.[70] The Tories' intransigence on this matter must be viewed in the context of the ongoing attempts to negotiate a settlement in Northern Ireland during the mid-1990s. John Major's government had overseen an IRA ceasefire between 1994 and 1996, but it had quickly collapsed following the bombing of Canary Wharf. In this political climate any government contributions to a Famine commemoration in Liverpool could easily have been construed as a show of sympathy with Irish nationalists, further alienating Major from the right wing members of his party, which maintained ties with Unionists in Northern Ireland.

With the election win of Britain's Labour government in 1997 and Tony Blair's declared commitment to restoring the IRA ceasefire and bringing Sinn Féin into talks about Northern Ireland's political future, the odds of Liverpool's Famine commemoration gaining government support improved considerably. Blair, who, despite his mother's counsel, often referred to his Irish heritage, ultimately did manage to create the circumstances whereby Liverpool became an officially sanctioned site to remember the effects of the Famine in Britain.[71] The turning point came in June 1997 at the Great Famine event in Millstreet, County Cork, attended by celebrities and politicians alike, including Irish President Mary Robinson and President Clinton, who delivered a live video-transmitted message, which lamented the tragedy of the Famine while celebrating

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[70] Not one Conservative MP signed Parry's Early Day Motion.

[71] In his youth, Blair often visited his mother's hometown of Ballyshannon, Donegal. See Don Akenson, *An Irish History of Civilization, Volume 2* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press), 547-549, for the story of Hazel Blair advising teenager Tony against drawing attention to his Irish roots for fear it might impede his career ascent in England.

its blessing for the United States. But the main feature of the event was a letter written by Blair and read by actor Gabriel Byrne before an audience of 15,000. In the letter, Blair ventured where no British Prime Minister had before, acknowledging that during the Famine "those who governed in London...failed their people through standing by while a crop failure turned into a massive human tragedy." While reflecting on this painful memory, Blair was also determined to use the Famine sesquicentennial to "pay tribute to ways in which the Irish people have triumphed in the face of this catastrophe," particularly celebrating the contributions that Irish people in Britain had made, "not only in areas such as music, the arts and the caring professions but across the whole spectrum of [its] political, economic and social life."[72]

Whether Blair's Famine letter amounted to a formal apology, and there was much debate about this among historians and in the British and Irish press, it was, as the *Irish Times* put it, "the nearest a British government has come to apologizing for the Famine."[73] As expected, Blair had to weather a torrent of criticism from Tories and Unionists who felt that such an interpretation of the Famine, rather than contributing to any healing process, strengthened the Irish Nationalist cause and set the stage for further acts of terrorism. The controversy also provided the opportunity for some to lash out against Irish Catholics. John Taylor, deputy leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, was unequivocal in directing blame at the Irish, whose "mentality is one of victimhood."[74]

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[72] Christine Kinealy, *The Great Irish Famine: Impact, Ideology and Rebellion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002),
[73] *Irish Times*, 2 June 1997.
[74] *The Daily Telegraph*, 2 June 1997.

Although the organizers of Liverpool's Famine commemoration had never lobbied for any official British statement on the Famine, they were sure to benefit from its utterance. Despite the small waves of anti-Irish prejudice generated by Blair's message, it gave the GFCCL confidence that the Labour government was favourably disposed to commemorations of this contentious chapter of Anglo-Irish history and would agree to their request for funding and official sanction.

But five months following Blair's historic quasi-apology, there was still no sign of government funding for the Liverpool commemorations and frustration was mounting within the GFCCL. Having raised £20,000, it remained £10,000 shy of what was needed to pay for the design, construction, and installation of the memorial.[75] While the memorial project had enjoyed support from many Members of Parliament and Liverpool's City Council, the Famine Committee was dismayed by the silence of the British government on the matter, detecting "an echo of the official indifference to the Famine itself back in 1847."[76]

The GFCCL was soon appeased, though, when on November 18, 1997, in a letter to Kevin McNamara, Liverpool-born Labour spokesman on Irish affairs, and to Louise Ellman, Liverpool Riverside M.P., Tony Blair announced that he would explore ways to help fund the Liverpool commemorative monument. In this letter, which he feared might

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[75] The Great Famine Commemoration Committee (Liverpool), *Nuacht (Newsletter)*, October 1997, 1, McKeane Papers. In addition to the Irish government's contribution, the GFCCL by this point had received support from a variety of organizations, including academic institutions, local councils, trades unions, and small firms.
[76] The Great Famine Commemoration Committee, *Nuacht (Newsletter)*, November 1997, 2, McKeane Papers.

be interpreted by Conservatives as "a significant gesture to Irish nationalists,"[77] Blair did his utmost to avoid contention, recognizing "that the Great Famine caused much distress and suffering" while emphasizing "the positive aspects of the relationship between Ireland and Britain."[78] One week after Blair's intentions were made public, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mo Mowlam, in response to further prodding from Louise Ellman, promised to pursue the issue of funding the Famine memorial, acknowledging that "the famine and its after effects are part of our history, as of Ireland's."[79] By January 1998, the British government had matched the Irish contribution of £5000, and the GFCCL began preparing for an unveiling ceremony in late 1998, an event originally scheduled for July 1997 to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the height of the Famine tragedy.[80]

Concerned that this postponement would lead to "the temporary eclipsing of the commemoration of the Great Hunger by the bicentenary of the 1798 Rising,"[81] the GFCCL, in collaboration with Canon Nicholas Frayling, organized a commemorative service in February 1998 called "Remembrance and Reconciliation" at St. Nicholas Anglican Parish Church. Following a ritual practice integral to many commemorations of the Holocaust, wars, and other catastrophic events, the St. Nicholas ceremony began with

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[77] *The Times*, 20 November 1997. According to Ian McKeane, interview by author, Liverpool, UK, 12 June 2006, Kevin McNamara, a descendent of Irish migrants fleeing the Famine, was an ardent supporter of the commemorative undertaking from the outset.
[78] *Irish News (Belfast)*, 20 November 1997.
[79] *Liverpool Echo*, 27 November 1997.
[80] The Great Famine Commemoration Committee, Nuacht (Newsletter), February 1998, 1, McKeane Papers. The rest of the funding for the monument came from public and private organizations and members of the public on both sides of the Irish Sea and points beyond.
[81] The Great Famine Commemoration Committee, *Nuacht (Newsletter)*, June-July 1998, 1, McKeane Papers.

eight members of the Famine Committee taking turns reading aloud the names of the 7,500 people (at least 2,000 of whom were not Irish) who died in Liverpool from typhus or Famine-related diseases in 1847 as a funeral bell tolled every thirty seconds. A service of prayer and reflection followed, with the readers presenting the list of names to Canon Frayling of St. Nicholas and representatives from the Methodist and Roman Catholic Churches,[82] who laid it on the alter as the choir sang *Eternal Rest Grant to Them.*[83] The service concluded with pipers leading the 350 congregants to the Mersey, where the Irish Ambassador to Britain and Liverpool's Lord Mayor cast wreathes on the river as St. Nicholas' bells continued to ring. The final act of this commemoration took place at St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, where Canon Leo Stoker oversaw a brief wreath-laying ceremony at the 1898 memorial to ten Liverpool priests who died in 1847 while tending to the ailing Irish.[84]

While this commemorative event focused on the tribulations of the Irish who landed on Liverpool's shores during the Famine and the sacrifice of priests who died while offering relief, Canon Nicholas Frayling also used the occasion to raise awareness of what he perceived as the unequal, colonial relationship between Britain and Ireland, most evident in the Famine years when the state "failed to feed a starving people."[85]

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[82] Alec Fuller was the representative of the Methodist Church and Father Michael Gaine was the sole Roman Catholic priest in attendance. As an advocate of modernizing the Catholic Church and founder of the Movement for the Ordination Of Married Priests, Father Gaine was often at odds with senior bishops during his twenty years of campaigning for priests' right to marry. See *Manchester Evening News*, 13 August 2009.

[83] Canon Nicholas Frayling, interview, *Daybreak*, BBC Merseyside, 6 February 1998.

[84] The Great Famine Commemoration Committee, *Newsletter*, January 1998, 1-2, McKeane Papers.

[85] Canon Nicholas Frayling, "An English Repentance," *The Guardian*, 11 March 2000.

Frayling, who had worked closely with the Famine Committee since 1996 and would be a central figure in the unveiling ceremony of the Famine memorial in November 1998, was clear about what this service commemorated: "It was not so much their suffering, it was the neglect of these people as the Famine developed that we remembered."[86] Although a vocal critic of both republican and loyalist violence,[87] Frayling was adamant that peace and reconciliation could only be achieved if the British acknowledged their historical sins and showed "real sorrow and penitence and apologise unequivocally ...for "the wrongs [they did] to the Irish over the centuries."[88] In this light, we can see the ecumenical commemorative service in St. Nicholas's Anglican Church led by Canon Frayling and the GFCCL was not only meant as a tribute to the victims of typhus in 1847, but also intended to be "a healing gesture," in line with Tony Blair's expression of regret for the Famine, which Frayling considered "a very significant building block in the process towards the Northern Ireland peace talks."[89]

The organizers of the commemorative ceremony hoped that its ecumenicism would not only serve as an example of political and religious healing that would have application for Northern Ireland, but also as a call to peace in Liverpool, a city in which sectarianism had persisted for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[90] By involving representatives of several Christian denominations and making the journey

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[86] *Liverpool Daily Post*, 9 February 1998.
[87] In 1996 Frayling published *Pardon and Peace: the Making of the Peace Process in Ireland* (London: SPCK Publishing, 1996), a book that attempts to situate the views of Northern Irish nationalists and loyalists in the context of Anglo-Irish relations.
[88] "Donavan's View," Interview with Canon Nicholas Frayling, http://lindahome.freeuk.com/donovansview/Ireland.html (accessed May 2006).
[89] Canon Nicholas Frayling, interview, *Daybreak*, BBC Merseyside, 6 February 1998.
[90] "Donavan's View," Interview with Canon Nicholas Frayling.

across town to St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Toxteth, the site of the 1898 memorial cross to the martyr priests, this act of remembrance was intended as "a contribution towards healing and reconciliation" for the city.[91] Famine remembrance, in this instance, was an opportunity for Liverpudlians to own up to its troubled past, "to try to move forward, reconciled together and to work and to pray for peace."[92]

The Intercession of St. Anthony's

However, the ecumenical outlook of Frayling and the GFCCL was not shared by all in Liverpool during the Famine sesquicentenary. A few months before the service of remembrance and reconciliation, another church-based Famine event was organized, one that produced its own distinct set of commemorative messages. Unlike the event at St. Nicholas, the commemoration at St. Anthony's Church, situated on Scotland Road in the centre of the traditionally Irish area of Vauxhall and long regarded as "the mother parish of the northern docklands," was exclusively Roman Catholic.[93] This was the one Liverpool Famine memorial event not to involve the Great Famine Commemoration Committee or adopt an ecumenical approach. Like the event at St. Nicholas's Church, the ostensible commemorative imperative at St. Anthony's service was to remember and name the victims of 1847; however, in this case the commemorative lens was focused

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[91] Canon Nicholas Frayling, interview, *Daybreak*, BBC Merseyside, 6 February 1998.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Frank Boyce, "From Victorian 'Little Ireland' to Heritage Trail: Catholicism, Community and Change in Liverpool's Docklands," in *The Irish in Victorian Britain: the Local Dimension*, eds. Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), 278. By the end of 1847 approximately 80,000 Irish had settled in the Vauxhall area.

primarily on those 2,303 people (most of them Irish) who were buried at St. Anthony's that year and the priests who served the church through the Famine years. In an eighty-eight page book published in conjunction with this commemorative occasion, all of the known names and ages of those who died in the parish in 1847 are listed.[94]

The commemoration of the Irish Catholics interred at St. Anthony's began on St. Patrick's Day 1997, six months before the service, when a new Visitor Centre at St. Anthony's was opened by the Bishop of Liverpool to commemorate the Famine and typhus victims of 1847.[95] The £250,000 centre offers tours of the church's crypt, exhibits a collection of eyewitness accounts and newspaper reports pertaining to the typhus epidemic. It also provides facilities for genealogical research, including a database containing information regarding the births, baptisms, marriages and deaths of thousands of people listed in the parish archives. This local heritage initiative, designed to draw tourists to Liverpool's economically depressed north end, laid the groundwork for the commemorative service at St. Anthony's, providing Catholic leaders in Liverpool an opportunity to use public memory of the Famine in 1847 to help rebuild a sense of community in an area that since the 1960s had suffered from loss of industry, depopulation, and multiple closures of schools and parishes.[96]

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[94] *The Great Hunger Commemoration Service, St. Anthony's Church, Scotland Road, Liverpool, Friday 3 October 1997*, (Liverpool: Newsham Press, 2004), 38-52.

[95] The official opening of St. Anthony's Visitor Centre did not actually take place until 17 March 2004 at a ceremony conducted by the Archbishop of Liverpool, Patrick Kelly and two of Liverpool's auxiliary bishops, Vincent Malone and Tom Williams. Bishop Williams served as a priest at St Anthony's for fourteen years and was instrumental in organizing the heritage site.

[96] Boyce, "From Victorian 'Little Ireland' to Heritage Trail," 277; Lane, *Liverpool: City by the Sea*, 139-140.

Yet, the October 1997 commemorative service at St. Anthony's was more than a parochial act of community remembrance organized to revitalize a struggling neighbourhood. It offered a number of historical perspectives on the Famine and its impact on Liverpool, most notably, that of Frank Neal, a professional economic historian and an authority on the Irish influx into Britain during the Famine years.[97] His narrative focused on Liverpool's north end, "an area containing more Irish than most Irish towns in the period," but also provided an overview of the tragedy that struck the city as a whole in 1847.[98] In his commemorative address, Neal confronted a popular historical perspective not often addressed openly in Liverpool during the commemorations: "extreme Irish nationalist opinion [that] accuses the Liberal British government of 1847 of genocide." While rejecting this interpretation, he did insist that "the British government of the time was callous, uncaring and obsessively attached to a free market ideology."[99] However, Neal's interpretation of the Famine and the role of British authorities, which is shared by most historians, was challenged implicitly during the service with the reading of a lengthy excerpt from John Mitchel, the exiled Young Irelander and journalist, who was so instrumental in shaping nationalist public memory of the Famine.

While such historical perspectives were central to the service, most of the hymns, prayers, speeches, and sermons delivered in October 1997 at St. Anthony's were directed towards understanding how this dark period in Ireland and Liverpool's past

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[97] See Frank Neal, *Black '47: Britain and the Famine Irish* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988).
[98] *The Great Hunger Commemoration Service*, 3.
[99] Ibid., 5.

could be used to forge a brighter future. Archbishop Patrick Kelly implored the congregation to remember the "many hundreds of thousands of Irish people who fled the Great Hunger and sought refuge on these shores," and "call to mind the poor of today's world, and especially those who are enduring famine or forced migration."[100] Similarly, Tim Allen of CAFOD, who had spoken the year before at the GFCCL's lecture series, drew parallels between the victims of Famine in 1847 and those suffering in Liberia and North Korea, suggesting that "this time of looking back should also be a time of looking forward."[101] In this regard, St. Anthony's commemoration was similar to the other commemorative undertakings in Liverpool, which took up the cause of those afflicted by hunger and poverty at the end of the twentieth century.

However, in this instance the commemorative agenda of attending to the world's poor and marginalized did not incorporate the ecumenism of Mary Robinson's narrative of remembrance. The messages communicated during the memorial service were couched in the language of a Catholic mission, with references to spreading the light of the Holy Father, to the martyrdom of priests, and to Catholic charitable societies and aid agencies. More than any other commemorative event staged in Liverpool during the 1990s, the service at St. Anthony's emphasized that the victims of the Famine were predominantly Catholic, that the fallout from the Famine migration was most severe in Liverpool's north end, and that the Catholics of Irish descent in this area were bequeathed

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[100] Ibid., 13.
[101] Ibid., 9-10.

with historical memory of Famine-era suffering that gave them the special insight and empathy necessary to combat contemporary impoverishment.

In 1995, when the search began in earnest for an appropriate site for the Famine monument, Catholic authorities in the city had made it clear that they were not interested in collaborating in a citywide Famine commemoration.[102] Originally, the consensus among members of the GFCCL was that the most appropriate setting for the Famine monument would be on the grounds of Liverpool's Metropolitan Roman Catholic Cathedral because of its close proximity to the city centre and the fact that it stands atop the ruins of Brownlow workhouse, which housed thousands of Irish during the Famine years and beyond. Cathedral authorities scuttled this plan, however, despite repeated efforts by members of the Famine Committee to persuade them of the importance of situating the Famine memorial on their site.[103] The Dean of the Cathedral presented them with the option of directing funds towards the construction of new gates for the Cathedral's crypt, but the GFCCL let it be known that a pair of subterranean gates just wouldn't swing it as a Famine memorial. Its decision to seek an alternative commemorative site in the city purportedly did not sit well with leaders within the Catholic hierarchy, as it meant that Catholic fundraising might be diverted from St. Anthony's, which was considered the most appropriate site for the Catholic

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[102] Ian McKeane, letter to the author, 20 March 2006. The absence of all but one of the members of the GFCCL, from the St. Anthony's service is a reminder of the separateness of the city's Catholic and non-denominational commemorative undertakings.
[103] Ian McKeane, interview by author, Liverpool, UK, 23 July 2005.

commemoration of Liverpool's Famine experience.[104] The Church's unwillingness to cooperate with a non-denominational organization in a citywide commemoration was a reflection of the insularity and suspicion that had long characterized Catholic-Protestant relations in the city,[105] as well as a reminder of the Catholic hierarchy's traditional predilection to sidestep Irish politics, even in its moderate, conciliatory forms.[106]

Constructing a Famine Site

When it became clear that the Famine memorial would not find its home on Cathedral grounds, the GFCCL took its search for a monumental site to City Council, another public institution in Liverpool scarred by the city's history of sectarianism. Aware of the legacy of bitterness between Tory and nationalist (later Labour) councillors, the GFCCL made it clear that it "wanted a site that wouldn't raise any partisan political issues." Remarkably, as soon as this assurance was offered, the GFCCL, according to its chair, Greg Quiery, was given "one hundred percent support inside city council."[107] From the

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[104] Ibid. None of the money raised from the publication of St. Anthony's commemorative booklet was directed towards funding the Famine monument in the city centre.

[105] Ian McKeane, letter to author, 20 March 2006, claims that the GFCCL "was not popular with the Cathedral Authorities since we were non-denominational and frequently said so."

[106] Greg Quiery, interview by author, Livepool, UK, 12 June 2006, assumes that the lack of cooperation from Cathedral authorities "was because we were associated with Irish politics, which has always been something to keep at arm's length for the Catholic Church in Lancashire. Quiery's perspective is shared by Mary J. Hickman, "The Religio-Ethnic Identities of Teenagers of Irish Descent," in *Catholics in England, 1950-2000: Historical and Sociological Perspectives*, ed. Michael P. Hornsby-Smith (London: Cassell, 1999), 182-198, who argues that the Church has long been determined to erase the Irish context of Catholicism in Liverpool.

[107] Greg Quiery, interview by author, Liverpool, UK, 12 June 2006. In 1995, Liverpool's Dublin-born Lord Mayor, Michael Black, was supportive of the Famine commemoration and of forging cultural connections with Ireland. During his first term in office in 1993-1994 he proposed

perspective of city authorities, as long as the GFCCL had no republican axe to grind, the history of the Famine Irish could form a significant strand of the city's new multicultural heritage narrative.

But there was still the challenge of finding an appropriate memorial site—one that was central, tranquil, and safe from the threat of urban development in the future.[108] After rejecting several sites that did not meet its criteria, most members of the GFCCL were pleased when city officials recommended a highly visible plot of land in the city centre on the corner of Leece and Berry Street. The catch was that the Famine monument would stand next to another Liverpool monument: St. Luke's, an Anglican church that had been hit by a German incendiary bomb in May 1941. Its burnt-out husk was left standing as a memorial to Liverpudlians killed during the war and a peace garden was cultivated on the grounds of the church.[109] Members of the Famine Committee claim not to have been that fazed by the possibility that their memorial might be dwarfed in the shadow of a longstanding war memorial, nor were they deterred by the implications of sharing a site that might evoke memories of another incursion into Liverpool by foreigners that brought suffering to its citizens. After brief debate within the GFCCL about whether St. Luke's was an appropriate venue, and having burst "a bubble of disapproval [that] arose from the Catholics on the Committee,"[110] who were apparently

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twinning Liverpool with Dublin, an initiative that was eventually realized in February 1997. See *Liverpool Echo*, 17 March 2003.

[108] Greg Quiery, interview by author, Liverpool, UK, 12 June 2006.

[109] "The Great Famine Commemoration Committee of Liverpool, Unveiling of the Liverpool Monument to the Great Famine, St. Luke's Gardens, Leece Street, Liverpool, 24 November 1998," 3, McKeane Papers.

[110] Ian McKeane, interview by author, Liverpool, UK, 23 July 2005.

uneasy with erecting a Famine monument on the grounds of a non-Catholic church, the Famine Committee decided to accept the site. By June 1996, it rationalized the choice of this location by pointing out that the monument would stand just "200 metres from the southern area of Irish settlement in the Famine years and closer still to the birthplace of Dr. Duncan, who worked to alleviate the worst of the squalor in which so many had to live and which cost many lives."[111]

The Famine Committee's decision to commission an Irish sculptor to construct the monument out of granite imported from Ireland, was another strategy employed to help brand the Irishness of the site.[112] From the dozens of submissions the GFCCL received in response to the notices it placed in artists' journals in Britain and Ireland, four sculptors from Japan, Scotland, Liverpool, and Northern Ireland, respectively, were invited to Liverpool to pitch their proposals for a Famine monument. The Committee settled on the submission of the Irish artist, Eamonn O'Doherty, known for his large-scale public sculptures, including works such as *The James Connolly Memorial* and *The Tree of Gold* in Dublin, as well as *The Emigrants* in Derry, a series of seven bronze figures recalling the city's historic role as an emigration port. Following the GFCCL's directive to avoid a design that was too literal or clichéd a symbol of Irishness,[113] O'Doherty proposed a non-figurative piece that is sombre and understated.[114] Standing

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[111] The Great Famine Commemoration Committee of Liverpool, *Nuacht (Newsletter)*, June 1996, 1, McKeane Papers.
[112] Ibid., 1.
[113] Greg Quiery, interview by author, Liverpool, UK, 12 June 2006.
[114] Three years after completing the Liverpool Famine Memorial, O'Doherty was commissioned to create the Great Hunger Memorial in Westchester, New York.

thirteen feet in height, the monument is a rectangular slab of granite with a smooth front and rough-hewn edges that appears as an elongated and slightly bowed tombstone. Its front side features a thin cross etched in the stone. Mounted four feet in front of the stone is a heavy bronze bowl, flanked by plaques bearing inscriptions in English and Irish.

Figure 3.01. Sculpture lowered into place. Source: *Liverpool Daily Post*, November 13, 1998.

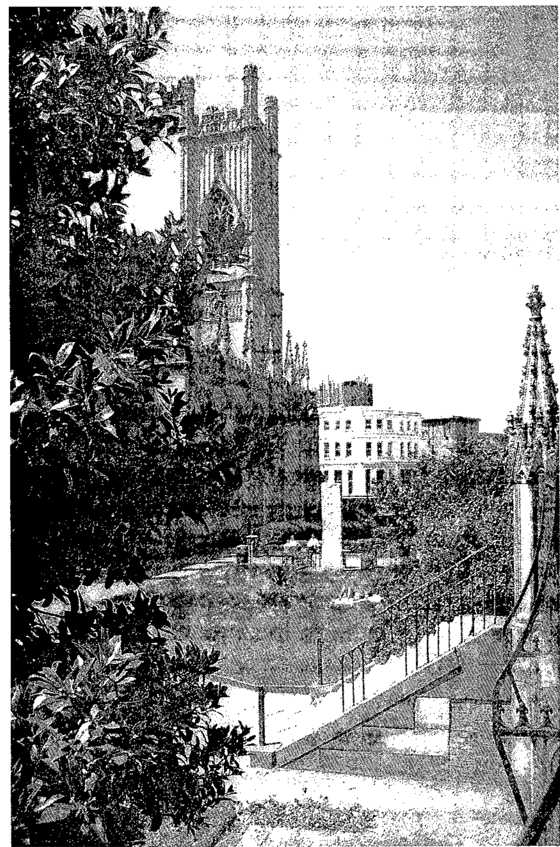

Figure 3.02. View from Leece Street of St. Luke's grounds and the Famine memorial, June 2006

Figure 3.03. Famine monument and St. Luke's Anglican Church, gutted by a German bomb in May 1941 and now a war memorial, June 2006.

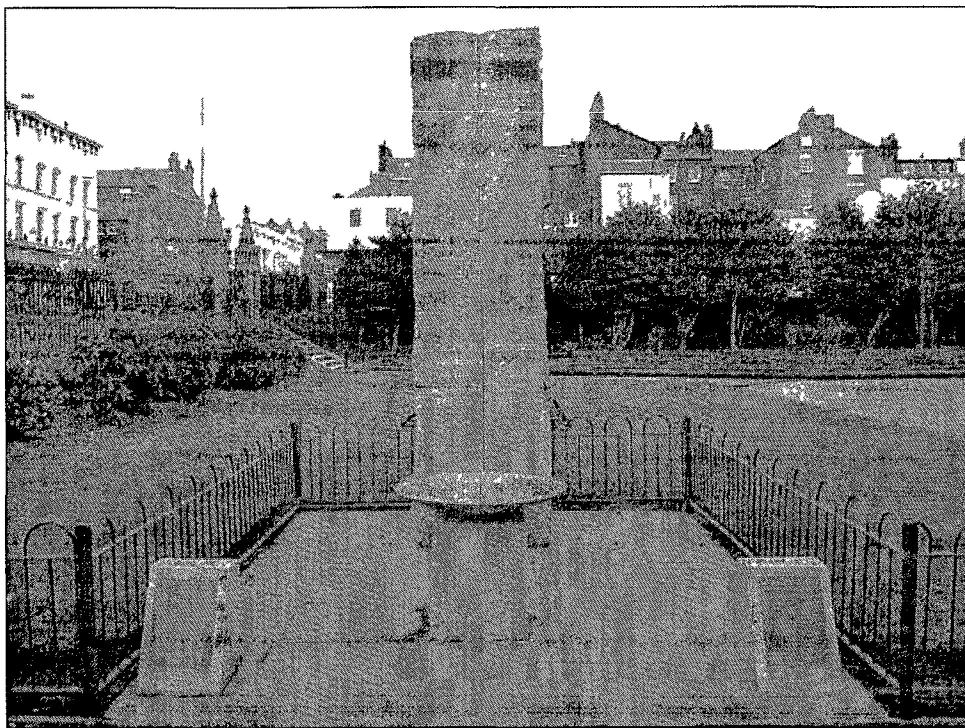

Figure 3.04. The memorial site in St. Luke's Gardens, June 2006

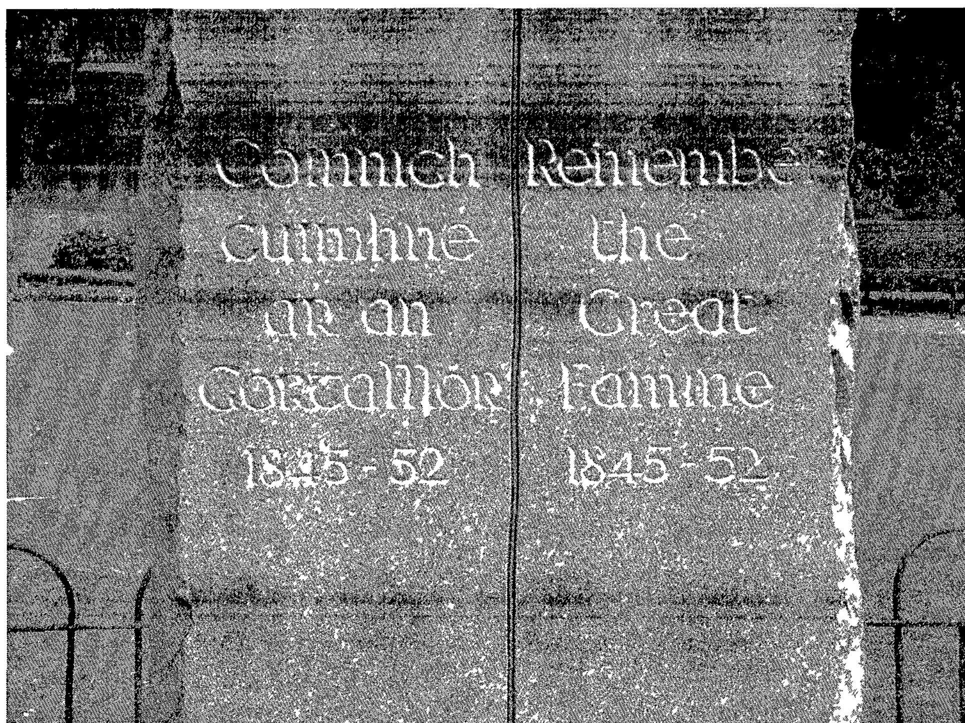

Figure 3.05. Irish and English inscriptions on the face of the monument, June 2006

The text on these plaques does not stray far from the commemorative narrative that the Famine Committee had been promoting since 1994, one that was part lamentation and part celebration of a dramatic turning point in Ireland and Liverpool's history. Although reference is made to the dire consequences that English colonization had for many "dispossessed" Irish, and "authorities" are implicated for offering little assistance to those Irish suffering from hunger and disease, the GFCCL was careful to craft a straightforward commemorative message that steered clear of a nationalist interpretation of the Famine. Aware of the precedent of producing a multivalent Famine memorial that incorporated radically nationalist readings, the Famine Committee "did not want to do what the Hibernians who in 1909 erected the cross on Grosse-Île, where you have three inscriptions all three of which say different things."[115] Summoning the ecumenical spirit of the commemorative undertaking, the latter half of the text highlights the good work of both Catholic and Protestant clergy and that of "many Liverpool citizens [who] gave generously to help the sick and starving," and celebrates the many ways in which the descendants of Irish migrants "have made a distinctive contribution to the multi-cultural heritage of the city." The inscription ends on a familiar note, urging those who remember the Great Famine to "continue the work of helping those displaced by famine and disease in many parts of the world."

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[115] Ian McKeane, interview by author, Liverpool, UK, 12 June 2006. The English inscription pays tribute to the Irish emigrants who "to preserve the faith, suffered hunger and exile in 1847-48." The Irish message offers a more radical interpretation of the consequences of British rule in Ireland: "thousands of the children of the Gael were lost on this island while fleeing from foreign tyrannical laws and an artificial famine." Finally, the message in French, while bearing more similarities to the English inscription, has emphasizes the role of "le Prêtre Canadien" in consoling and honouring victims of exile.

By the time the monument was at last ready for public viewing Mary Robinson had stepped down as President of Ireland, but her successor, Mary McAleese, a strong supporter of Robinson's belief in the utility of Famine memory in the diaspora, made the trip to Liverpool for the dedication ceremony.[116] On the morning of November 24, 1998, seventeen months later than originally planned, the Irish President unveiled the memorial before a crowd of four hundred. Mayors of all the Merseyside boroughs were in attendance, as were a number of local Protestant clergy, including Canon Nicholas Frayling, who made brief introductory remarks along with Greg Quiery and Ian McKeane on behalf of the GFCCL. Notably absent from the event, however, were representatives of the Catholic Church in Liverpool, though they had been invited to attend.[117] In her address, McAleese stuck to a familiar script, comparing Irish suffering during the Famine to "the vast starvation in Africa." "This memorial," she assured those assembled, "will remind us that hunger and famine persist throughout the world and we still face the moral imperative to...offer shelter to those who have lost everything." Characterizing Liverpool as the historic centre of Irish migration, McAleese went on to describe the memorial as a permanent reminder of the many ways the Irish since the Famine have "helped to develop and to mould the character of this great city."[118] Thus, the ceremony proclaimed the memorial the most visible and poignant reminder of the Famine experience, and that of the Irish more generally, in Liverpool.

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[116] While in Liverpool, the Irish President also received an honorary degree from John Moores University and delivered the Roscoe lecture at St. George's Hall.
[117] Ian McKeane, letter to author, 20 March 2006.
[118] *Catholic Pictorial*, 29 November 1998.

Figure 3.06. Irish President Mary McAleese addresses crowd during the dedication ceremony, November 24, 1998. Source: *Catholic Pictorial*, November 29, 1998.

Figure 3.07. Greg Quiery, Chair, GFCCL, speaking at the monument's unveiling ceremony on November 24, 1998. Source: *Catholic Pictorial*, 29 Nov 1998, 6.

The monument's inauguration was seen as signalling the close of the commemorative season, but the Great Famine Commemoration Committee carried on its work of identifying unmarked Famine sites in Liverpool. In the five years following McAleese's visit, the Famine Committee raised plaques at seven sites throughout the city, including two previously unmarked 1847 burial sites (one of them a car park since the 1950s); two Irish neighbourhoods (one across the Mersey in Birkenhead and the other in Vauxhall, where the mortality rates in 1847 were particularly high); the workhouse on Brownlow Hill; the former site of an outdoor relief shed on Fenwick Street; and Clarence Dock Gates, through which many of the Famine Irish entered Liverpool. The installation of these plaques, each featuring a green and red Celtic-style design with inscriptions in Irish and English, fulfilled the four main commemorative objectives of the city's sesquicentennial observances: recalling the Famine tragedy, recognizing the Irish contribution to the city since the Famine, reconciling sectarian differences, and raising awareness of contemporary social crises.[119] Yet, perhaps more than any other commemorative undertaking, the plaques, which were locally designed and funded, represent the most straightforward attempt by an Irish group to name what had gone unnamed, and in some small way reclaim the Irish bodies and buildings that for generations had disappeared from the city's landscape.

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[119] *Liverpool Echo*, 18 March 1999.

Figure 3.08. Brownlow Hill Workhouse Plaque

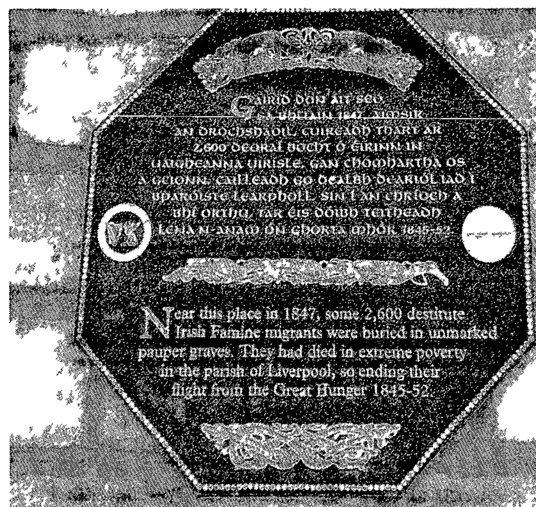

Figure 3.09. Plaque marking site of the pauper burial ground of St. Mary's on Mulberry Street

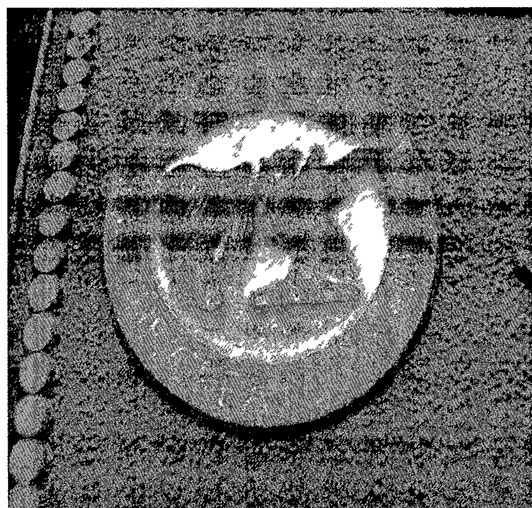

Figure 3.10. Detail from famine plaque at Albert Dock

Figure 3.11. Ian McKeane leading the annual Liverpool Irish Heritage Walking Tour at the site of the Famine monument, October 19, 2008

Conclusion

As this chapter has demonstrated, Famine memorialization in Liverpool was far from an unproblematic reflection of collective memory. The process of eliciting support, raising funds, and negotiating a commemorative discourse was shaped by an array of international, national, and local political forces. The GFCCL faced a number of challenges in its attempt to create a citywide Famine commemoration. At various points during the latter half of the 1990s it had to stimulate public interest in the city's Irish history, gain the trust of local politicians, and contend with competing commemorative interests within the Irish Catholic community. As early as 1994, the Famine Committee also recognized the enormous influence that national politics and the fragile Northern Ireland peace process would have on its commemorative project. As the British city renowned for its Irish nationalism and its sectarianism, Liverpool would not easily be granted official, national sanction and support to remember the Famine. Shrewdly, the GFCCL aligned itself with other Irish diasporic organizations that were marking the Famine sesquicentennial, and looked to Mary Robinson and Mary McAleese for leadership and support. Robinson, who paved the way for Tony Blair's 1997 Famine statement, offered the Liverpool Irish a new way to look back on this tragic and highly contentious chapter of Irish and British history without assuming traditional nationalist perspectives. Instead of directly casting blame on the British for failing to prevent Irish mass mortality and dispersal, Robinson used Famine commemoration as a way of celebrating the Irish triumph over adversity and as a call to action to prevent such a catastrophe repeating itself.

Clearly, the Liverpool commemorations involved the political instrumentalization of Great Famine memory on a number of levels. But the fact that expressions of public memory are politically motivated and often manipulated should not stop us from contemplating their cultural significance, or prevent us from considering the possibility that their historical narratives serve to construct meaningful identities. If, as historian Peter Gray argues, commemorations are a form of "communal self-definition through historical self-presentation," historians would do well to focus more on trying to understand how and why various groups have used public memory to identify themselves, rather than limiting their role to disproving the sense of the past that is transmitted.[120]

In part, the Famine commemorations in Liverpool derived a sense of the past from a narrow focus on local events. But the commemorative narratives were also often framed in universalizing terms, situating these local events in the context of wider and longer-term processes that were claimed to have significance not only for local commemorators but for others as well. This approach projected a representation of Irishness that was simultaneously narrowly defined and open-ended. In one sense, the commemorations emphasized the authenticity and distinctiveness of an idealized Irish group, one that persists despite generations of assimilation into the host society. At the same time, Irish ethno-cultural identity was represented as one with widely shared historical features, open to all past and present victims of injustice and colonial subjugation, and even to those people sympathetic to their plight. Exhibiting both universal and unique qualities,

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[120] Gray, "Memory and the Commemoration of the Great Irish Famine," 47.

the Liverpool Irish were cast by the Famine commemorations as a group of diasporic and domestic significance, one that could serve an exemplary political and cultural role in the imagined multicultural context of late twentieth century Liverpool.

Chapter Four

Irresistible Forces, Immovable Object

> Irishness...constitutes a big unconscious voltage and all it needs is some transformer to make it current in a new and significant and renovative way.
>
> Seamus Heaney, "Correspondences: Emigrants and Inner Exiles"[1]

By the time the Liverpool Irish had raised a Famine monument, Montreal's memorial to the 1847 migration had already been standing for 139 years. Though the process of claiming the Ship Fever Monument as the city's Famine memorial had been protracted, by the latter half of the twentieth century, the Black Stone (as it came to be known) was one of the most powerful, albeit intermittently utilized, transformers of Irishness in Montreal. The kinetic demonstrations that stained the city green every St. Patrick's Day were the most garish and gregarious expressions of attachment to an Irish heritage, but the Black Stone, as a reminder of the mass burial of thousands of Famine migrants who succumbed to typhus upon their arrival in 1847, offered Montrealers a more solemn and poignant point of connection to an Irish past. Periodically—most often at times when political or commercial interests in the city threatened to push it from its pedestal—the Black Stone became conspicuous anew, leading groups of Irish Catholics in the city,

[1] Seamus Heaney, "Correspondences: Emigrants and Inner Exiles," in *Migrations: the Irish at Home and Abroad*, ed. Richard Kearney (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1990), 29.

eager to identify with their Irish origins, to revisit the memorial site and reassess its significance and the Famine history it evoked.

Montrealers of Irish Catholic descent were not, however, universally or consistently drawn to the memorial to reaffirm their sense of Irishness. For long stretches of time in the second half of the twentieth century, the Black Stone appeared derelict amidst the industrial debris of Pointe Saint-Charles, particularly as many Irish Catholics moved away from traditional working class neighbourhoods in the city's southwest. Moreover, the ambivalence of Irish Catholics regarding the suitability of the Stone as a Famine memorial—a feeling that had pervaded the commemorations at the memorial in the half-century following the 1897 jubilee—persisted. With its architects and trustees Anglican, its dedication to Irish Catholics absent, its form unfinished, its maintenance by crown corporations and municipal authorities neglected, and its location desolate, the Black Stone remained a deeply flawed monumental manifestation of Famine memory. Yet these perceived imperfections in the Stone, which left the site perpetually violable, were instrumental in motivating groups of Irish Catholics in the city to preserve the memorial site and organize acts of Famine remembrance.

At moments when the Black Stone was either under siege or overlooked, and was at risk of being displaced or disappearing altogether, Irish Catholic groups responded by rallying to preserve the landmark and reacquaint themselves with the historical events that led to its construction. In the process, they became more aware of the efforts of preceding generations of Irish Catholics in the city to safeguard the site. Famine commemoration thus became more than a matter of recalling the events of 1847, it was

also an opportunity to remember those who since 1900 had preserved the memorial site and resume their longstanding political struggle to claim an Irish Catholic stake in the memorial landscape of Montreal.

Despite (and in a sense because of) its shortcomings as a Famine monument, the Black Stone continued to attract the commemorative interest of groups of Irish Catholics in Montreal who ensured that it remained the city's most evocative memorial to 1847. As such, it is the essential site from which to examine the dynamics of later twentieth century Famine commemoration in Montreal—a process that was spasmodic, often contentious, and always shaped by the political and social circumstances in which it was formulated. The historical significance of the memorial site, and by extension the Famine, was negotiated and constructed against the backdrop of postwar Irish and Canadian nationalism, urban renewal leading up to Expo '67, the social and political transformations of the Quiet Revolution, the emergence of multiculturalism as official government policy (particularly as it was implemented by Canadian heritage institutions), and the outpouring of international interest in Famine commemoration in the 1990s. Examining the efforts that were made to commemorate the Famine and preserve Montreal's memorial, this chapter explores how historical understanding of 1847 was articulated and how local, national, and transnational Irish identities were constructed between the 1947 Famine centenary and the sesquicentennial fifty years later.

"What Was Otherwise a Shining Year"[2]

Even with the surge of interest in the Ship Fever Monument that was generated in 1942 with the discovery of human remains at the memorial site, commemorating the Famine's 100th anniversary in Montreal was not given high priority. As discussed in chapter three, observances of the Famine centenary were generally muted in Liverpool and the other urban centres throughout the Atlantic world where the Famine Irish had disembarked. Explanations of the centennial silence that point to the persistent economic insecurity and inherited cultural values of Irish Catholics at home and abroad do not take us very far towards understanding the general reticence of Famine remembrance in mid-century Montreal, where there was an established tradition of commemoration and a memorial site at which Irish Catholics had ascribed ritual significance to the historical catastrophe. It is necessary to examine the social and political circumstances of the city's Irish Catholics in the immediate post-war period and consider how identities were negotiated in that particular context.

By the time of the centenary, Ireland was making a concerted effort to reach out to its diaspora, particularly in North America, often calling upon shared memory of British malfeasance in its bid to establish the harp without the crown. Having sloughed off its dominion status ten years earlier, Ireland was close to shuffling its way out of the Commonwealth and emerging as a Republic.[3] In the process, Irish politicians, most notably newly elected Taoiseach John Costello, and his predecessor, and leader of the opposition, Eamonn De Valera, were at the forefront of an international campaign against

[2] *The Gazette*, 18 September 1947.
[3] The Republic of Ireland was officially declared on April 18, 1949.

partition.[4] Irish politicians, both in the Dáil and while on tour in North America, expressed interest in nurturing the historical connections between Ireland and its diaspora that formed a vast, albeit amorphous, Irish Catholic community.[5] The "spiritual empire," forged by Ireland and its exiles, was regarded as a civilizing influence amidst the turmoil of the postwar world and a vital source of strength in Ireland's bid for independence from Britain.[6] On September 1, 1948, one week before he declared Ireland a republic, John Costello delivered this message in a speech to the Canadian Bar Association in Montreal. He included Irish Canadians in "our national struggle," the purpose of which was "to free ourselves from those British institutions which, as the inevitable consequence of our history had become associated in our minds with the idea of national subjection."[7] While such references to Irish historical injuries suffered at the hands of the British were not uncommon in nationalist speeches aimed at the Irish diaspora, rarely was the Famine explicitly recalled as the greatest of all grievances.

Brandishing history in the struggle for Irish nationhood was a strategy that could backfire, especially given the powerful contingent of Anglo-Canadians who remained wary of Irish nationalism. Celebrating the historical ties that connected the Irish with

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[4] John Bowman, *De Valera and the Ulster Question, 1917-1973* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 258-260.

[5] Mary E. Daly, "Nationalism, Sentiment, and Economics: Relations Between Ireland and Irish America in the Postwar Years," *Eire-Ireland: Journal of Irish Studies* 37, no. 1-2 (Spring-Summer, 2002): 74-92.

[6] John A. Costello, Taoiseach, The Republic of Ireland Bill, 1948—Second Stage, 24 November 1948, *Debates of Dáil Éireann*, vol. 13, http://historicaldebates.oireachtas.ie/D/0113/D.0113.194811240051.html (accessed 12 December 2007).

[7] John A. Costello quoted in Elizabeth Keane, *An Irish Statesman and Revolutionary: The Nationalist and Internationalist Politics of Séan MacBride* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006), 41.

Canada was one thing, but delving into the history of British rule in Ireland could prove contentious. As John Costello discovered during his stay in Montreal in early September 1948, Irish nationalists were not the only ones with a stake in Ireland's future who were willing to invoke the past in service of their own interests. At an event at McGill University hosted by the British-born Governor-General, Viscount Alexander of Tunis, a decorated veteran of both world wars whose ascendancy family had roots in County Derry, the Taoiseach faced "a sequence of insults to his country."[8] After being snubbed by the Governor-General, Costello was seated in front of a model of Roaring Meg, a cannon used by Protestants in the Siege of Derry in 1689 bearing the inscription, "The walls of Derry and no surrender."[9] At another dinner hosted by the Governor-General a few nights later, the Taoiseach was again affronted, this time because he was not toasted as were the heads of other sovereign states, despite assurances from Canadian diplomats that he would be accorded the same honour. Whether these slights to Costello hastened his announcement in Ottawa on September 7, 1948 that Éire would repeal the External Relations Act and become a republic remains uncertain, but Costello's postwar visit to Montreal does serve as a reminder that many within Canada's governing elite were less than receptive to Irish nationalist narratives and ambitions.[10]

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[8] Don Akenson, *An Irish History of Civilization, Volume 2* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 592-593.
[9] Keane, *An Irish Statesman and Revolutionary*, 41.
[10] Just as the Taoiseach was declaring Ireland's republican ambitions, the Deputy Prime Minister of Northern Ireland found a sympathetic audience at the Royal Empire Society in Montreal, where he announced that his country was "not for sale." Quoted in Escott Reid, Acting Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Mr. Turgeon, High Commissioner in Ireland, 14 October 1948, *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, vol. 14 -922, chapter x, "Commonwealth Relations," part 8, Relations with Individual Countries, section b, Ireland and

The pivotal and painful role that Canada had recently played in the Second World War also made conditions in Montreal less than ideal for commemoration of the Famine centenary. Whereas Ireland had refused to join ranks with the Allied forces, a decision distressing to the Governor-General and many ordinary Canadians, Canada's contribution to the war effort had been immense.[11] One million men and women were mobilized and massive amounts of food, munitions, and money were shipped overseas, primarily to Britain. Between the fall of France in the early spring of 1940 and the attack on Pearl Harbour, which signaled the United States' entry into the war, Canada was Britain's principal ally. With the sacrifices of war still fresh in the minds of Montrealers, it would have been difficult organizing a commemorative undertaking that might provide Irish nationalists an opportunity to express moral outrage at the failure of the world's wealthiest empire to prevent mass starvation and dispersal in 1847. In this context, it is hardly surprising that drudging up memories that might stir anti-British feelings was not the main concern of Irish Catholics in Montreal.

While the scarcity of Famine remembrance can be partially attributed to a postwar social and political climate that was inhospitable to any view of the past that focused on mass mortality (with the exception of memorials to veterans) and retrospectively assigned culpability to Britain, it is essential to recognize that some of the reluctance to

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Visit of Prime Minister, DEA/50021-40 (1948), http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/department/history-histoire/dcer/details-en.asp?intRefid=10610 (accessed 16 January 2008).

[11] Northern Ireland's contribution of 38,000 men and women to the war effort strengthened the province's position within the United Kingdom. Yet an even greater number of southern Irish volunteers (43,000) joined the British forces during the war, despite Ireland's official neutrality. See Brian Barton, *The Oxford Companion to Irish History (2nd edition)*, ed. S.J. Connolly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 532.

commemorate the Famine centenary came from within Montreal's Irish Catholic community itself. 1947 marked the 100-year anniversary of two key concurrent historical moments in the history of Montreal's Irish Catholics: the arrival of Famine migrants and the opening of St. Patrick's, parent church to Montreal's English-speaking Roman Catholics. Memories of the Famine migration, however, which "threw a dark shadow of tragedy over what was otherwise a shining year,"[12] could not compete in 1947 with the urge to celebrate the centenary of what was widely considered the crowning achievement of Irish Catholics in the city. St. Patrick's was an appealing symbol not only of the Irish Catholics' fidelity to their faith and cultural identity, but also of their capacity to overcome adversity while contributing to Canada's national development.

In the process of commemorating the 100th anniversary of St. Patrick's Church, which included a series of processions, banquets, and memorial masses that attracted citywide attention, the Famine was drawn occasionally into the commemorative frame, but its appearance was peripheral to the main object of remembrance. The authors of the booklet published to mark the church's centenary expressed gratitude for the "heroic service" of the Grey Nuns "rendered during the Black '47 when the sheds at Point St. Charles witnessed their self-sacrificing labors,"[13] but had little desire to dwell on the tragedy that unfolded below the hill in 1847. The typhus that afflicted tens of thousands of Famine migrants and many of Montreal's residents did not even rank as "the gravest crisis faced by our forefathers"—a dubious honour reserved for Bishop Bourget's 1866

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[12] *The Gazette*, 18 September 1947.
[13] *The Story of One Hundred Years: St. Patrick's Church, Montreal 1847-1947* (*Montreal*: Plow & Watters Ltd., 1947), 30.

parish realignment. The Famine is mentioned in passing, and only to edify "the priceless inheritance of example bequeathed to us by the founders of our church."[14] The references to the tragic aspects of 1847 made during the mass commemorating the inauguration of the church, involving thousands of Montrealers, many of whom remained outside the church to hear the ceremonies over a public-address system, were even more indirect.[15] While acknowledging the "foul weather," the "sorrow," and "the tangled pathways of life," that the church's parishioners had endured in 1847 and various times since, Cardinal McGuigan of Toronto made no mention of the Famine, preferring to use his centenary sermon to celebrate St. Patrick's as "a home of celestial peace amidst the discordant clamors of the world."[16]

References to the Famine were also notably absent from a memorial service held at the church six months earlier in conjunction with St. Patrick's Day celebrations. While outlining the Church's history in his memorial sermon, Reverend James M. Gillis, omitted mention of the Famine migrants who remained in Montreal and flocked to St. Patrick's, at least until 1850 when St. Ann's was constructed for them in Griffintown.[17] Nor did he refer to the 6,000 Irish Catholic victims of typhus who were buried in Montreal in 1847. Preferring to focus on the looming threat of a present-day calamity, Gillis celebrated St. Patrick's Church, and Christian faith more generally, as a source of

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[14] Ibid., 27.
[15] Cardinal James McGuigan of Toronto delivered the centenary sermon, with Cardinal Norman Gilroy, Archbishop of Sydney, Australia and Cardinal Bernard Griffin, Archbishop of Westminster, England in attendance.
[16] *The Gazette*, 15 September 1947.
[17] Alan Hustak, *Saint Patrick's of Montreal: the Biography of a Basilica* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1998), 36-37.

hope in a world threatened by communism and the expansionist Soviet empire, which was "openly making war on God, on religion and on all that is fit to be called civilization."[18] He went on to lament the decline of the British Empire, "which, whatever be its faults, [had] for a century and a half acted as a centripetal force holding together conflicting political elements which now threaten to fly off like blazing worlds from the central sun."[19] It is remarkable that such nostalgia for British imperial might could be uttered in an Irish Catholic church that was inaugurated just as tens of thousands of Irish refugees arrived in Montreal, having fled from famine in one British colony only to face a typhus epidemic in another.

This commemorative rhetoric on the occasion of St. Patrick's centenary is a reminder that the parent church of English-speaking Catholics in Montreal had never embraced Irish Famine migrants as its core constituency. Though five of six curates at St. Patrick's sacrificed their lives while ministering to typhus victims in the fever sheds during the summer of 1847, the nascent church and its burgeoning flock, like most Montrealers at the time, had no desire to be associated with the destitute mass of migrants who washed up on the city's docks at the height of the Famine. Those Irish Catholics who had arrived in Montreal in the generation before 1847 had struggled to establish a respectable place for their community in the city, and the church they had constructed was designed to stand as a towering reminder of their achievements and legitimacy. By the time of St. Patrick's inauguration in March of 1847, the last thing established Irish

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[18] *The Gazette*, 17 March 1947.
[19] Ibid.

Montrealers wanted was an influx of distressed and impoverished Irish immigrants undermining their position in the host society.

In the century following its inauguration, St. Patrick's lace-curtain Irish congregants kept their distance from the legacy of the Famine migration. Unlike St. Ann's in Griffintown and St. Gabriel's in Pointe Saint-Charles, two working class Irish Catholic parishes which had sought to keep Famine memory alive, St. Patrick's was disinclined to reach out to the descendants of Famine migrants or to support Irish nationalists in Montreal who looked to the catastrophe as the most devastating example of British misrule in Ireland.[20] Church leaders, not surprisingly, expressed little interest in the Ship Fever Monument—Montreal's most recognizable symbol of the collective memory of the Famine. *St. Patrick's Message*, the parish magazine from 1915 to 1965, which announced and reported on community events, "produced no references to the walk or to the Black Stone Monument."[21] St. Patrick's considered the annual walk to the Stone, a commemorative act that garnered interest from Irish Catholic parishioners below the hill, outside its purview.

St. Patrick's position vis-à-vis the Black Stone stemmed no doubt from its aversion to the nationalist ambitions of the AOH, the memorial's unofficial custodians, but was also a consequence of the class divide that historically separated Montreal's Irish

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[20] Hustak, *Saint Patrick's of Montreal*, 38. It was not until the church's sesquicentennial in 1997 that a plaque memorializing the Famine victims was installed in Saint Patrick's.
[21] A.B. McCullough, "The Black Stone Monument—Survey of Scholars and Additional Research," Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, 1996 (1996-14), 7.

Catholics living above and below the hill.[22] Though by the mid-twentieth century many Irish Catholics had moved from the working class neighbourhoods in the southwest of the city to more affluent neighbourhoods, Griffintown, and to a lesser extent Victoriatown (Goose Village) and Pointe Saint-Charles, were generally still perceived as Irish Catholic neighbourhoods that remained mired in conditions not much better than those faced by their Famine forebears. From the upper city, Stephen Leacock looked down upon Girffintown as "a wretched area, whose tumbled, shabby houses mock at the wealth of Montreal."[23] St. Patrick's was happy distancing itself from such persistent negative associations attributed to traditional Irish neighbourhoods below the hill. Perched atop Beaver Hill, occupying an elevated plain above Montreal's industrial slums in the southwest district of the city, the neo-Gothic church was celebrated as a "fine landmark…towering above the surrounding buildings, symbolic of the greatness and permanence of the Faith for which it stands" in the city's memorial landscape.[24] The roughly hewn Famine memorial below the hill remained in the shadows of St. Patrick's, an Irish Catholic landmark that stood as a symbol of growth, progress and achievement in Montreal.

In line with their longstanding reluctance to engage in Famine remembrance, St. Patrick's community and religious leaders used the church's centenary celebrations to

[22] The St. Patrick's Society was known to keep its distance from the AOH. For example, the Hibernians were excluded from the head table at the 1947 St. Patrick's Society annual dinner, a snub that led the AOH to send the Society a letter of complaint. See General Meeting Minutes of the Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal, 2 May 1947, Concordia University Archives, Montreal, P026—Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal Fonds, 1864-1984.
[23] Stephen Leacock, *Montreal: Seaport and City* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1948), 172.
[24] *The Gazette*, 13 September 1947.

emphasize the dynamism and adaptive capabilities of Irish Catholics in the city rather than dwell on the tragedy that beset the church and its parishioners during the summer and autumn of 1847. The centenary banquet held at the Windsor Hotel under the auspices of the St. Patrick's Society on September 15, 1947 was an occasion to toast the Irish as well-integrated and well-to-do Canadians whose nineteenth-century pioneering efforts were unparalleled. From his position at the head table, against the backdrop of an enormous Union Jack, the Governor-General, Viscount Alexander of Tunis, acknowledged "the joint efforts of men of many races" to building "this great Dominion," but insisted, "the contribution made by [his] countrymen was second to none."[25] Several other speakers at the event, including Archbishop Charbonneau of Montreal and James McCann, Minister of Trade and Commerce, reiterated the Governor-General's view of the Irish as Canadian nation-builders and celebrated the great success that the Irish in Montreal had met in all fields of endeavour.[26]

The only reference made to the Famine at the banquet came from John Hearne, High Commissioner for Éire, who chose to be more diplomatic in his handling of history than he had been five years earlier at the re-interment ceremony at the Ship Fever Memorial. While recalling the "often tragic days of Irish immigration," Hearne's address focused on "the friendship and charity offered to the Irish by their French-speaking fellow citizens."[27] Mayor Camillien Houde, whose opposition to conscription during the

[25] *The Gazette*, 16 September 1947.
[26] One indication of the influence that Irish Catholics had come to wield in municipal politics was that the City Council caucus meeting scheduled for September 15, 1947 was postponed because it coincided with St. Patrick's centenary banquet. See *The Gazette*, 12 September 1947.
[27] *The Gazette*, 16 September 1947.

Second World War had made him few friends among Anglo-Protestants in Montreal, did not mention the Famine, but took up this theme of solidarity between the French and Irish in Montreal, paying tribute to "the close ties of friendship and religion, which had always united the two races throughout Canadian history."[28] Thus, on the occasion of St. Patrick's centenary, Irish Catholics in Montreal were fêted as a group that played a unique historical and contemporary role, one that was vital to establishing Canadian nationhood and key to maintaining harmonious relations between French and English Canada. The sudden arrival of the Famine Irish in the city in 1847, to which most Montrealers at the time, French and English-speakers alike, objected strenuously, did not figure into this rather triumphal mid-twentieth century representation of Irishness.[29] In this context, Famine remembrance, which in past years often involved Irish nationalist charges of British misrule, could not compete with more celebratory and patriotic constructions of Irish Canadian identity afforded by St. Patrick's centenary.

Although St. Patrick's centennial events crowded the Irish commemorative calendar in 1947, Irish Catholics in Montreal did find opportunities to mark the 100th anniversary of the 1847 migration and typhus epidemic, particularly within observances of other centenary celebrations and St. Patrick's Day. This popular annual Irish ritual in Montreal—less an act of remembrance than revelry—made room for a special

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Governor-General Lord Elgin wrote of the mayor's death in his dispatch to Earl Grey, Secretary of State for the Colonies, on November 12, 1847: "This day the Mayor of Montreal died, a very estimable man who did much for the immigrants—and to whose firmness and philanthropy we chiefly owe it that the Immigrant sheds were not tossed into the river by the people of the Town during the summer." Theodore Walrond, C.B. ed., *Letters and Journals of James, Eighth Earl of Elgin, 1811-1863* (London: J. Murray, 1872), http://infomotions.com/etexts/gutenberg/dirs/1/0/6/1/10610/10610.htm (accessed 24 October 2009).

commemoration of "the great tragedy that struck the Irish community in Montreal when thousands of Irish immigrants died in the terrible ship fever epidemic of 1847." [30] Two days ahead of the parade, the public was invited to hear J.B. O'Reily lecture on the Irish in Montreal in 1847 at the annual meeting of the Canadian Catholic Historical Association.[31] The history of the Famine migration was also referred to in the course of several other centenary milestones being observed in Montreal in 1947, including the Canadian National Railway's celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the Montreal and Lachine Railway,[32] as well as memorials marking the deaths of Daniel O'Connell, "Irish fighter for political and religious freedom,"[33] and the mayor of Montreal, John Easton Mills, whose passing in 1847 "added a new sorrow to the long experience of loss which the city had known that year."[34]

In addition to drawing attention to the Famine centenary through their coverage of these commemorative events in 1947, Montreal newspapers occasionally offered their readers brief historical accounts of "the migration of the Irish peoples across the Atlantic" and the "terrible trials" endured en route and upon arrival.[35] While *The Gazette* generally sidestepped the question of culpability for the catastrophe, *Le Devoir*, the newspaper of

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[30] *The Gazette*, 15 March 1947.
[31] *The Gazette*, 14 September 1947
[32] *The Gazette*, 18 September 1947
[33] *The Gazette*, 15 March 1947. Commemorating O'Connell's death alongside the Famine would have no doubt irked some radical Irish nationalists. O'Connell and his fellow constitutional nationalists were often held responsible by their more revolutionary brethren for failing to mount resistance and submitting to the will of the British government. For John Mitchel, *Jail Journal; or, Five Years in British Prisons* (New York: Published at the Office of "The Citizen", 1854), 15-16, O'Connell's practice of "half unsheathing a visionary sword, which friends and foes knew to be a phantom," was unforgivable.
[34] *The Gazette*, 15 March 1947.
[35] Ibid., 8.

the French-Canadian intelligentsia, adopted an interpretation of the Famine that would have pleased the most ardent of Irish nationalists. In an article that stressed the strong historical bond between Irish-Catholics and French-speaking Quebecers, the newspaper endorsed a nationalist construction of the Famine that directed blame at Anglo-Irish landlords who, in collusion with the British government, ruthlessly evicted masses of starving tenants from their land and exported "du blé d'inde et de l'orge en quantité suffisante pour nourrir tout le peuple irlandais."[36] In its rendering of the Famine, *Le Devoir*, which had recently led a campaign opposing conscription, was drawing attention to the failures of British governance in Ireland one hundred years earlier—what it considered a relevant historical lesson for those pushing to extend the powers of Quebec's provincial government. By recognizing the great number "des gens absolument canadiens-francais avec des noms irlandais" the newspaper was also using the Famine centenary to celebrate Quebecers' historic openness and generosity to immigrants while still presenting the Quebec nation in strictly Roman Catholic terms.[37]

While willing to celebrate the historic and religious bonds that connected them to their Francophone counterparts, few Irish Catholics in Montreal who engaged in Famine remembrance in 1947 used the centenary to articulate a traditional nationalist narrative. The AOH, long the city's most militant of Irish Catholic organizations, which had on past commemorative occasions echoed *Le Devoir*'s nationalist interpretation of the Famine,

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[36] *Le Devoir*, 4 juin 1947.

[37] In 1951, 78.6 percent of Montrealers were Roman Catholic; 6.5 percent Jewish; 5.7 percent Anglican; 3.9 percent United Church; and 2.3 percent Presbyterian. See Maghda Fahrni, *Household Politics: Montreal Families and Postwar Reconstruction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 30.

avoided making radical political pronouncements on the historic significance of the Famine centenary.

The 100th anniversary did, however, inspire the AOH to organize commemorative events at the two most prominent Famine sites in Quebec (and Canada): the Black Stone and Grosse-Île, the site of annual Irish visitations since 1909 when the enormous Celtic Cross was erected.[38] In September 1947, 1,000 Irish Catholics from Montreal, Quebec City, and various parts of the United States were scheduled to participate in a pilgrimage to Grosse-Île to mark the Famine centenary.[39] However, just two weeks before the event was to take place, the Canadian government closed the island due to concerns about the environmental conditions on Grosse-Île. It came to light that the Canadian Department of National Defense, in cooperation with military officials from the United States, had been using the island as an experimental research station for bacteriological warfare since 1942. It seems that one hundred years after it became a breeding ground for typhus, Grosse-Île, had again turned toxic. Remarkably, the AOH did not draw attention to this apparent desecration of the graves of their Famine forebears. The Hibernians instead followed "the advice of the Dominion Government,"[40] relocating their pilgrimage to Ste. Anne de Beaupré, a site of a popular Catholic shrine but one of no particular significance to the Irish or their migration to Quebec in 1847.[41]

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[38] Marianna O'Gallagher, *Grosse Ile: Gateway to Canada, 1832-1937*, (Sainte Foy, Quebec: Carraig Books, 1984), 107.
[39] Two government steamers and a private ferry were chartered for the day.
[40] *The Gazette*, 6 September 1947.
[41] *The Gazette*, 19 September 1947. The Auxiliary Bishop of Montreal, Lawrence P. Whelan, led the pilgrimage.

Though the soil on which the Black Stone stood was also contaminated (in this case by years of unregulated industrial activity in the area), the government did not stand in the way of Irish Catholics participating in commemorative activities at the memorial site in 1947.[42] In accordance with its annual tradition, the AOH led a walk to the Black Stone on the last Sunday of May. The city's St. Patrick's Society and the United Irish Societies, whose members participated in the AOH walk, organized another similarly low-key centennial visitation to the Stone in July, but this small commemorative gathering attracted no media attention and was the last of its kind at the site in 1947.[43]

The memorial briefly became the object of renewed centenary commemorative interest one year later when Montreal played host to the AOH's annual convention. On this occasion, the AOH did its best to admire a quality that was "strangely impressive about the unaltered monolith raised from the riverbed by the Irish workmen in 1859," claiming that "like the Treaty Stone of Limerick, it is invested in its natural simplicity with an air of solemnity that strikes the observer more forcibly than the grandeur of sculptural granite or mounted bronze." Though a sombre reminder of "the darksome year of 1847" the Stone was also believed to hold "a wealth of story, romantic, tragic, heroic and inspiring." But the AOH could not hide its disappointment with the muted interest in the Famine that the centenary had inspired, conceding that the 1847 migration was

[42] In the 1970s, some former Goose Village residents had considered resettling in the area, until they discovered that the land was too polluted. In 2005, developers purchased the CN's train yards adjacent to the site of the Black Stone. It is estimated that decontaminating the area could cost as much as $22 million. See *The Gazette*, 27 October 2005; *Montreal Mirror*, 11-17 March 2004.

[43] General Meeting Minutes of the Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal, 2 May 1947, Concordia University Archives, Montreal, P026-Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal Fonds, 1864-1984.

becoming “a story with which the present generation is not familiar, or of which they have no knowledge whatever.”[44]

The admonishment of Irish Catholics for neglecting the memory of the Famine Irish was a recurring motif in all acts of Famine commemoration in Montreal since the late nineteenth century, but the AOH’s frustration with Irish Montrealers who chose not to excavate the hidden layers of meaning embedded in the Black Stone was particularly telling. While the subdued response to the Famine centenary was in many ways shaped by broad social and political forces in the immediate postwar period and the powerful commemorative claims made by St. Patrick’s Church celebrating the achievements of Irish Catholics in Canada, the drift away from Famine remembrance and the increasing invisibility of the Black Stone as an emblem of Irish Catholic history and identity was also a consequence of the transformation of traditional Irish Catholic neighbourhoods in the southwest of Montreal.

By mid-century many longtime residents of Griffintown and Pointe Saint-Charles were moving to Verdun, LaSalle, or for the suburbs of Greenfield Park and Chateauguay on the south shore of the St. Lawrence.[45] Though a significant number of Irish-Catholics remained in Griffintown, they shared their neighbourhood with an assortment of working class francophones and Anglo-Protestants, as well as recent immigrants of Jewish, Lebanese, and Chinese descent. South across the canal from Griffintown, between the

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[44] Ancient Order of Hibernians, Convention in Montreal, August 1948, 64th National Convention Programme, 29-31.

[45] Montreal’s population declined by eighteen percent from 1966 to 1976 as many inner city residents relocated to the suburbs. See Andy Melamed, “Working Class Housing in Montreal, 1940-1980,” in *Montreal: Geographical Essays*, ed. David B. Frost (Montreal: Occasional Papers in Geography, no. 1, Concordia University), 165.

coal yards and abattoirs just east of the approach to the Victoria Bridge, Victoriatown, otherwise known as Goose Village, had by mid-century become a predominantly Italian, working class neighbourhood, with pockets of Montrealers of Irish, English, Polish and Ukrainian descent.[46] Languishing in the industrial landscape just west of Victoriatown, with the neighbourhoods in its vicinity in decline and gradually losing their traditional Irish Catholic constituency, the Black Stone appeared increasingly forlorn.

Locating the "Portable Shrine"

Though the Stone memorial was only ever literally at the centre of an Irish Catholic community for the first dozen years of the twentieth century, when the Grand Trunk Railway (GTR) moved it to St. Patrick's Square in Griffintown; its return in 1912 to the original memorial site, its continued reaffirmation as an Irish Catholic Famine memorial during the interwar period, and even its more recent use in 1942 as a cemetery in which the exhumed remains of typhus victims were re-interred, were in large part a result of the efforts of Montrealers of Irish Catholic descent who grew up in or still had close ties to the neighbourhoods close to the memorial site. With the dwindling number of Irish Catholics resident in Griffintown, Pointe Saint-Charles, and Victoriatown by the time of the centenary, it was inevitable that the Stone would suffer from a certain degree of neglect.

However, for those of Irish descent who remained in the area in the 1950s and 1960s, the Black Stone could still inspire moments of awakening to an Irish past, which

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[46] Goose Village included Bridge, Forfar, Conway, Britannia and Riverside Streets. See *The Gazette*, 25 May 1964.

were only made possible because of the collective significance that had been assigned to the site in years past. David Fennario, a playwright from the working-class neighbourhood of Verdun-Pointe Saint Charles, recalls his inadvertent, yet meaningful, introduction to the Black Stone as a ten-year old in 1957.[47] After exploring the old cattle pens near the Canada Packer's plant, Fennario and his friends were cycling along Bridge Street toward the river to clean up before heading home when they came upon the Black Stone. Though initially unclear about what they had seen, they eventually figured out that "the great black rock was probably some kind of tombstone marking the grave of some 6,000 people. But who they were or where they came from or how they ever ended up being buried under an expressway was beyond [their] understanding." Years later, Fennario set out to learn as much as he could about the historical episode that the Stone stood to memorialize: "Discovering what the Irish Stone was all about gave me a reason for becoming a writer. It made me want to tell the story of my community, a community that had somehow been largely left out of history."[48]

The memorial site also had the capacity to draw the attention of Montrealers of Irish descent who had moved away from Griffintown and Pointe Saint-Charles. The writer Peter Behrens credits his youthful encounters with the Black Rock in the mid-1960s as the inspiration behind *The Law of Dreams*, his recent Governor-General prize-winning novel, which chronicles one young man's escape from Ireland in 1847 to Liverpool and then across the Atlantic to Montreal. Behrens recalls going on drives with his grandfather after mass on Sundays. From Westmount, an affluent, and traditionally

[47] Fennario was born in Verdun, Quebec and claims partial Irish Catholic descent.
[48] *The Gazette*, 7 September 1991.

Anglo-Protestant, enclave in the city where his prosperous Irish-Catholic family had gained a foothold, they would occasionally make their way to the Black Stone. On these excursions, Behren's maternal grandfather, John Joseph O'Brien, whose own grandfather arrived in Montreal from County Clare as part of the Famine migration was reticent to offer history lessons—"I think he may have made a sign of the cross or maybe he just hissed or spat." Nonetheless, Behrens "got the message that this was a dark and almost a shameful place." The site was "a place of quite terrible resonance, which was still kind of radiating its Irish juju 120 years later."[49] Despite the relative silence about the Famine in his parents' and grandparents' generations, which Behrens attributes to "a kind of darkness and shame,"[50] he insists that "growing up Irish in Montreal, the Famine was an inescapable part of the shaping of [his] sense of the past," and one to which he felt compelled to return.[51]

In addition to such impromptu excursions to the site made by the Behrens family, more formal commemorative visitations continued to be organized in the twenty years following the centenary. Representatives of Irish Catholic organizations continued to look to the Stone as one of the most significant historic sites in the city, one deemed important enough to warrant visits from Irish diplomats. While in Montreal in November 1955, Leo McCauley, the Irish ambassador to Canada, expressed an interest in the history

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[49] Anansi: A Reader's Guide, "A Conversation with Peter Behrens," Anansi Press, http://www.anansi.ca/readingguides/1117/The%20Law%20of%20Dreams.pdf (accessed 16 November 2007).

[50] Linda M. Castellitto, "Novel Set During Famine Reveals Beauty Amid Struggle," *Bookselling This Week*, 5 September 2006, http://news.bookweb.org/m-bin/printer_friendly?article_id=4678 (accessed 16 November 2007).

[51] Peter Behrens, interview, *Live from Prairie Lights*, Iowa Public Radio, 4 December 2006, http://wsui.uiowa.edu/prairie_lights.htm (accessed 16 November 2007).

of Famine migrants in the city. After paying official visits to Paul-Émile Cardinal Léger, and Mayor Jean Drapeau, McCauley was brought by representatives of the St. Patrick's Society and the AOH to "the stone erected in memory of the Irish victims of the ship fever" for a small commemorative gathering.[52] In May 1964, John Carey, the Dublin-born Irish Trade Representative in Canada, participated in the pilgrimage to the Stone, an annual tradition organized by AOH that continued to take place on the last Sunday in May.[53] These commemorative practices, only made possible by the efforts of earlier generations to preserve the integrity of the memorial, presented opportunities for small groups of Irish Montrealers to keep the memory of the Famine migration to Montreal alive while forging contemporary connections with Ireland.

The 1964 pilgrimage to the Black Stone occurred at a time when the memorial site, and the surrounding neighbourhoods of Victoriatown, Pointe Saint-Charles, and Griffintown were under intense scrutiny by urban planners and politicians at City Hall interested in redeveloping the area. Since Mayor Jean Drapeau's election in 1960, "the emphasis in Montreal [was] for urban redevelopment on a massive scale," involving a series of large-scale projects, and the construction of modern transportation systems.[54] In the process of carrying out such transformative projects, it became apparent that "the thrust of urban renewal" was "one of eliminating obstacles to a more economically

[52] General Meeting Minutes of the Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal, 8 November 1955, Concordia University Archives, Montreal, P026-Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal fonds, 1864-1984.
[53] *The Gazette*, 25 May 1964.
[54] Melamed, "Working Class Housing in Montreal," 167.

efficient use of land," leaving the working class neighbourhoods between the southwest shore and the canal particularly vulnerable.[55]

City authorities first targeted Victoriatown, the small working class neighbourhood adjacent to the Black Stone that had been around since the 1890s. In 1961, Mayor Drapeau was prompted to pay a visit to the neighbourhood when a group of women from the area began objecting to "the hide and skin warehouses [that] made their homes fly-ridden and the whole district rat infested and stinking." Upon his arrival, a crowd of fifty "housewives...ran out to besiege the mayor and lodged their complaints in no uncertain terms," complaining of the blood that "runs out into the street" and the inescapable smell emanating from the factories that "makes life unbearable."[56] Drapeau, who was eager to wash his hands of such problems associated with what was widely considered the "the city's worst slum,"[57] took the opportunity to oversee Victoriatown's demolition. In November 1962, planners at City Hall produced the *Montreal City Urban Redevelopment Report*, which included thirty-two photographs depicting the unhealthy conditions in the Village's streets and homes.[58] Two years after the report came out, Victoriatown's three hundred buildings, most of them row houses, were leveled, leaving 1,389 residents, three quarters of them low-income tenants who on average paid $37 per month on rent, to find more costly accommodation elsewhere in the city.

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[55] Ibid.
[56] *The Gazette*, 1 August 1961.
[57] David B. Hanna and Frank W. Remiggi, "New Neighbourhoods in Nineteenth Century Montreal," in *Montreal: Geographical Essays*, ed. David B. Frost (Montreal: Occasional Papers in Geography, no. 1, Concordia University), 108.
[58] Melamed, "Working Class Housing in Montreal," 169, notes that the city went ahead with demolition of the area despite acknowledgement in the *Redevelopment Report* that local residents paid less for more space, that...a quarter of the households owned their homes, and that juvenile delinquency was low and that vital statistics for the area were favourable."

As construction of the Autostade and its parking lot began on the twenty acres of land where Victoriatown had recently stood, at what would soon comprise the northwest corner of the Cité du Havre sector of the Expo '67 site, a variety of other public works and large-scale construction projects involving the expropriation of large tracts of land were underway, transforming parts of Griffintown and Pointe Saint-Charles, the other neighbourhoods in the immediate vicinity of the Black Stone.[59] The construction of the Bonaventure Expressway, which would run north and west of the Victoria Bridge, bringing traffic into the downtown area from the Champlain Bridge and serving as the main access to the Expo site, was the construction project that had the biggest impact on the area.[60] This development was another setback for Griffintown, which for years had been suffering economically, especially since the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959, and was increasingly viewed by City Hall as a primarily industrial area.[61] Nor was it auspicious for the memorial Stone, which stood in the middle of Montreal's southwestern industrial corridor and was already "blackened by a century of traffic."[62] Despite assurances in the press that "the stone will remain," the many construction projects underway in the area surrounding the memorial site did not bode well for its future.

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[59] *The Gazette*, 1 October 1965. The Autostade was completed in 1966 and was home to the Montreal Alouettes from 1968 to 1976.

[60] The elevated section of the Expressway stretched for over one kilometre between the Victoria Bridge and the Lachine Canal. Dozens of houses and businesses were demolished during the Expressway's construction.

[61] See David Marvin, "Griffintown: a Brief Chronicle," *Habitat* 18, no. 1 (1975): 3-9.

[62] *The Gazette*, 8 June 1963.

By September 1965, it became clear that Expo's construction projects would interfere with the memorial site. City planners decided that by the spring of 1966 the Stone needed to be moved from its existing position between the old Bridge Street on the east and the CN lower spur line to the west so that a new approach road to the Expo site could be constructed.[63] In the name of progress, in this case a world exhibition showcasing Montreal as a modern, cosmopolitan city ripe for investment and tourism, the Famine memorial was once again at risk of removal from the site it was intended to preserve from desecration.

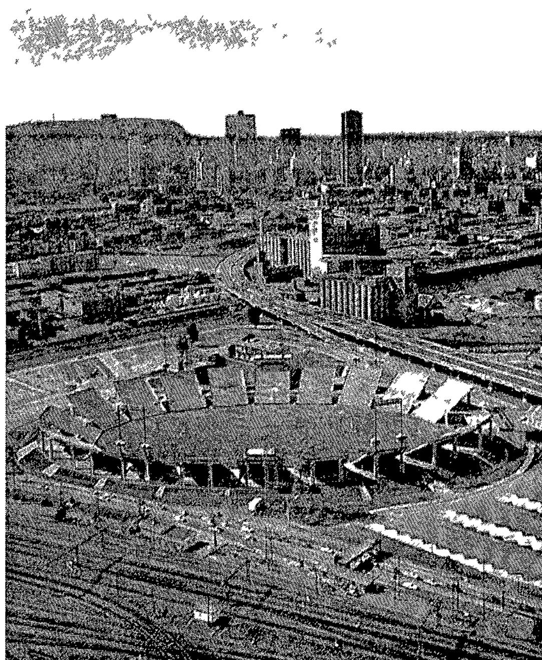

Figure 4.01. The Autostade, 1966

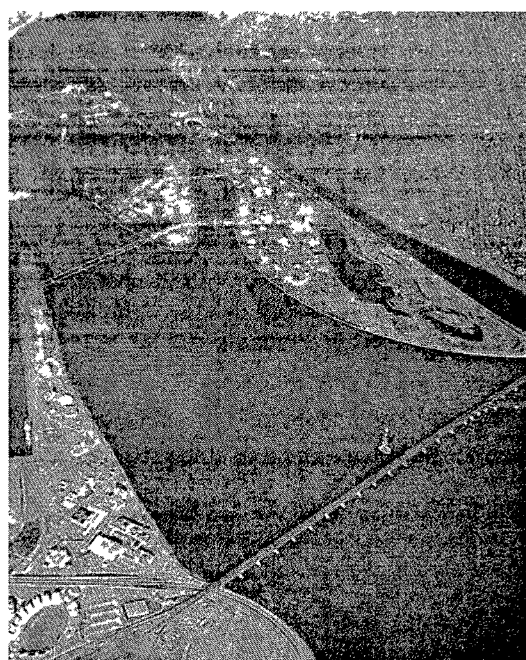

Figure 4.02. Aerial view of Victoria Bridge and the Autostade in bottom left corner, 1966

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[63] The railway was known as the Canadian National Railways (CNR) between 1918 and 1960 and as Canadian National/Canadien National (CN) after 1960.

Map 4.01. Southwest Montreal

Map 4.02. Land use in Victoriatown, 1962. Source: City Planning Department.

Formal objections to the plan could not be issued until October 1, 1965, when a statutory meeting was convened at City Hall to vote to appropriate funds and expropriate land needed to widen and straighten Bridge Street. At the meeting, two city councillors of Irish descent, Kenneth McKenna and John Lynch-Staunton, expressed their opposition to any expropriations that would violate the site of the Irish mass grave. McKenna, who was President of the St. Patrick's Society, insisted that city officials meet with representatives of the Irish community before reaching a decision on the matter.[64] The Chairman of Montreal's Executive Committee, Lucien Saulnier, who would eventually be lauded by Irish Catholic groups for his "consideration, sympathy, and help,"[65] was open to this idea

[64] *The Gazette*, 1 October 1965.
[65] "Minutes of Meeting of Irish Stone Committee," 13 June 1966, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.

and suggested that "the Irish community form a committee and offer recommendations" to the civic administration.[66]

Two weeks later, at a meeting held in city offices at the Bonsecours Market, a five-member Irish Stone Committee (ISC) headed by McKenna was established to discuss the city's planned move of the monument. The committee members included city councillor John Lynch-Staunton; Timothy Slattery, historian of the St. Patrick's Society; Frederick J. Sinnamon, Anglican Archdeacon of Montreal; Monseigneur Harold J. Doran of St. Patrick's Church; and Joseph Dunne, an architect and second vice-president of St. Patrick's Society. [67] Representatives from all Irish societies in the city, including the United Irish Societies, St. Patrick's Society, the AOH, the Irish Canadian Heritage Society also attended the meeting, a number of whom would be on hand at every subsequent ISC gathering, effectively insinuating themselves into the committee.[68]

At its inaugural meeting the committee adopted a surprisingly conciliatory tone, expressing a willingness to work with city authorities to their mutual satisfaction. Having received assurances from Lucien Saulnier, McKenna believed that "The city [was] most sympathetic to the feelings of the Irish community in this matter and wants to do everything in its power both to preserve the Stone and to ensure that the remains in the area are not desecrated."[69] McKenna gave the impression that the ISC had already come

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[66] Edgar Andrew Collard, *Montreal: The Days That Are No More* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1976), 195.
[67] *The Gazette*, 10 October 1965.
[68] Several Irish and Irish-Canadian political figures were also in attendance, including Fred McCaffrey, Consul-General of Ireland, and renowned City Councillor and MPP Frank Hanley, known as "the Son of St. Ann's" or "the Mayor of the Point."
[69] *The Gazette*, 15 October 1965.

to terms, albeit grudgingly, with the likelihood that the Stone would have to be moved a short distance. The feeling was that if the city had no choice but to relocate the monument, the ISC was determined to see that it was "done in a respectful manner."[70] Its self-ascribed role, therefore, would be to oversee this process and ensure that the city treated any remains discovered in the process of construction with dignity and promptly re-interred next to the Stone in its new location.[71] The gravest concern of Irish groups, which viewed the memorial site "as important if not more so" than its monument, was that the cemetery of Famine migrants would be defiled during the construction of Bridge Street.[72]

This initial reaction to the city's plan suggests that the attitude of some Irish Catholics towards the monument was ambivalent, as it had been since its inauguration in 1859. The Stone was not necessarily a sacred object in itself; its primary importance, as far as some Irish groups were concerned, was its function as a marker of hallowed land where Famine migrants were buried en masse. Yet, there was no denying that Irish Catholics in the city had over the course of several generations appropriated the Stone as a Famine memorial, despite the fact that it was still held in trust by the Anglican Bishop of Montreal. Thus, by 1965, the memorial significance of the site stemmed not just from its history as the resting place of thousands of Irish Famine migrants who died from typhus upon arrival in Montreal in 1847. The memorial had also become a reminder to Irish Catholics of the efforts made twenty-three years earlier to re-inter the remains of

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[70] *The Montreal Star*, 15 October 1965.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.

typhus victims next to the monument, and of the lengths to which their counterparts at the beginning of the twentieth century had gone to protect the gravesite from the industrial incursions of the GTR. Though the ISC did not react to the prospect of the Stone's removal from the memorial site with the same outcry as had their predecessors, the committee was aware of this legacy of struggling to maintain the integrity of the memorial, harking back to the early 1900s when "ill-feeling had prevailed, followed by rioting."[73] While Irish Catholics had only made threats of a riot in 1898, the ISC was right to recall the strong feelings that were aroused among Irish Catholics when the Stone was in jeopardy at the turn of the century. The memorial object had, over time, come to serve as a reminder of the various efforts made to preserve it from forces threatening its violation.

Despite its initial willingness to accede to the city's plan to move the monument, the ISC came to realize over the course of the winter and spring of 1966, that the fate of the memorial site was intertwined with the fate of its memorial Stone, and thus became more resolute in its efforts to keep the site intact. Although after eight months of "dickering between the civic administration and the special committee representing leading local Irish...organizations," many Montrealers, including some Irish Catholics who participated in the 1966 walk to the Stone, were still under the impression that the monument was destined to be displaced,[74] the negotiations involving the ISC, the City, the CN, and the Anglican Bishop of Montreal signalled that the relocation of the Stone

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[73] In 1898, MP Michael Quinn and Father Strubbe let the GTR know that the threat of an Irish Catholic riot was imminent if the memorial site was in any way desecrated, but there is no evidence that any rioting actually occurred.

[74] *The Gazette*, 29 May 1966.

was not a fait accompli. By the spring of 1966, Irish Catholic societies under the auspices of the ISC, claiming to speak on behalf of "the Irish Canadian Community of Montreal,"[75] were increasingly unwilling to accept the city's planned course of action and concentrated on applying political pressure to prevent the relocation of the monument.

Without any legal recourse to prevent the city from carrying out its planned removal of the monument,[76] the ISC focused efforts on ensuring that it had the support of Anglican Bishop Kenneth Maguire. Though widely recognized as the community with the most invested in the memorial site, Irish Catholics in Montreal had no proprietary rights when it came to the Black Stone, whereas at least Bishop Maguire, as trustee of the site, might be seen as exercising a certain legal and moral authority that would lend credence to their case. As Chairman of the ISC, Kenneth McKenna was in close correspondence with the Bishop between April and June of 1966, keeping him abreast of the various reports and resolutions made by the committee and extending him invitations to a number of ISC meetings. [77] During this time, Maguire also received letters from representatives of various Irish organizations in the city, including the Gaelic Athletic

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[75] See Irish Stone Committee, "Resolution Drafted at the Windsor Hotel," 25 April 1966, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal; D.J. Leyne to The Right Reverend R.K. Maguire, 26 April 1966, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal; Irish Stone Committee, "Revised Draft of the Resolution of the Irish Stone Committee," 12 May 1966, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.
[76] See Joseph Dunne to K. McKenna, "Re: The 'Irish Stone,'" 20 April 1966, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.
[77] Kenneth J. McKenna to Rt. Rev. Kenneth J. Maguire, Anglican Bishop of Montreal, 19 April 1966, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal; Kenneth J. McKenna to Rt. Rev. Kenneth J. Maguire, Anglican Bishop of Montreal, 12 May 1966, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.

Association, Montreal's Innisfail Social and Sports Club, and the AOH.[78] The latter group's vice-president for Canada, Gerald F. Carroll, who became a member of the ISC, took it upon himself to remind the Bishop of "the efforts of our predecessors of half a century ago to ensure the immobility of the monument" and express his organization's "vigorous opposition to any move which would reduce the status of our monument to that of a portable shrine which can be moved at any time at the whim of the City of Montreal or of other bodies."[79] By May 1966, the representatives of Irish Catholic societies were not convinced that the Stone's removal was imperative, nor did they think it inevitable.

The City of Montreal, however, despite its early assurance to the ISC that it would do its utmost to address the concerns of the Irish in the city, was no less determined to move the monument so that construction on Bridge Street could begin as early as May 1966. After digging up copies of the deeds of sale from Thomas Brassey to the Anglican Bishop in 1870 and from the Bishop to the GTR in 1912, lawyers for the City were convinced that it had "the necessary power according to its charter to acquire [the land] by expropriation and prior possession."[80] Nonetheless, the mayor's office did not want to unnecessarily ruffle any ecclesiastical feathers and knew that having the Bishop's blessing would help its cause. Paul Casgrain, Assistant City Attorney wrote to Bishop

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[78] D.J. Leyne to The Right Reverend R.K. Maguire; Martin Greene to Rt. Rev. Kenneth Maguire, 26 April 1966, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal; Gerald F. Carroll to Right Reverend Kenneth R. Maguire, 16 May 1966, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Paul Casgrain, Assistant City Attorney to the Right Reverend R.K. Maguire, Bishop of Montreal, "Re: Expropriation of Immoveables Situated on the South Side of Bridge Street and on the East Side of Britannia Street," 14 April 1966, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal. At this point, the city was already in the process of negotiating with the CN and the National Harbours Board to acquire the land it needed.

Maguire, reminding him that removal of the monument was not only essential to provide adequate access to the Expo site but also to solve the longstanding problem of traffic congestion at the entrance of Victoria Bridge. The City, Casgrain promised, would see to it that the relocated Ship Fever Monument would be declared a historical monument and that it "would assume the obligation that the Grand Trunk did in 1912, to maintain the appropriate upkeep of the monument in perpetuity."[81] Casgrain went so far as to argue that the monument's new site would be "better located," as it "forms part of the former burial emplacement."

When Bishop Maguire indicated he would not offer his authorization to Casgrain and his employers, but would support whatever decision Irish Catholic societies came to regarding the memorial site, the ISC's case to keep the Stone in place was strengthened considerably. While opting not to openly oppose the city's plan, Maguire's decision to abide by whatever decisions were reached by the ISC was a significant statement in itself. Unlike Bishop Bond, his predecessor who negotiated with the GTR at the turn of the century, Maguire was tacitly acknowledging that the Black Stone was a monument owned by Irish Catholics in the city. Though the Irish immigrants who flooded the city in 1847 were unacknowledged in the inscription chosen by the monument's Anglican architects, Maguire was well aware for whom this memorial had meaning: "I feel a deep responsibility for the trust which is involved in my office to the concerned Irish

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[81] Casgrain informed the Bishop that he had checked with the Commissioner of National Parks at Ottawa and with the Quebec Historic Monuments Commission at Quebec to determine if the Ship Fever Monument was classified as an historical monument.

community of Montreal."[82] Putting his faith in the ISC, a committee that he considered "widely representative" of Irish Catholic opinion on the matter of the monument,[83] Maguire reassured its chairman, Kenneth McKenna, that he would "act in accordance" with the wishes of the ISC.[84]

Even with Bishop Maguire's support, the ISC had to continue negotiations with the City over the proposed relocation of the Stone. After meeting in early May 1966 with representatives of the City of Montreal, the CN, and the Bishop of Montreal, Joseph Dunne, an architect representing the ISC, determined that the Irish committee had two options. The first was to consent to "the exchange of the present cemetery plot for an area of equal size located south and east of it but having a short stretch of common perimeter."[85] The alternative, or "the split-solution" as it came to be known, was to leave the Stone in its present position where it would "act as a median strip between two roads, one leaving the City and one entering the City."[86] Dunne understood that this solution would have "some grave disadvantages for ceremonies and for casual visitors to the Stone...because...it will be dangerous to access," but indicated to the chair of the ISC that this was the only alternative to moving the Stone that the City might find acceptable.

Under these circumstances, Dunne expressed his preference for relocating the monument. Though distressed at the lack of respect shown for the memorial site by the

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[82] Bishop of Montreal to Councillor Kenneth J. McKenna, 16 May 1966, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.
[83] Bishop of Montreal to D.J. Leyne, 12 May 1966, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.
[84] Bishop of Montreal to Councillor Kenneth J. McKenna, 16 May 1966.
[85] A.W. Bridgewater to Bishop Maguire, Re: "Irish Stone Monument", 16 June 1966, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.
[86] Joseph Dunne to Kenneth McKenna, 20 April 1966.

directors of Expo '67. Dunne, the second vice-president of the St. Patrick's Society, wrote to his confrère, Kenneth McKenna, pointing out that its present location and "unimpressive background" was "one of the reasons for the cavalier treatment of the Stone." If the City was held to its promise of providing parking grounds adjacent to the new site, refurbishing the Stone, repairing its pedestal and railings, and possibly erecting a background stone wall from which the monument would be illuminated at night, Dunne believed that the new site could be what the original site had never been: "a true place of pilgrimage." This broke with the conventional wisdom of Irish Catholic societies in the city, which held that the originally designated cemetery accurately marked the site of the 1847 Irish mass graves. Since the late nineteenth century, when the GTR and the Anglican Bishop had sunk holes in the site searching for evidence of the graves, Irish Catholics had generally insisted on the authenticity of the site, a position that became more credible in 1942 with the discovery and re-interment of human remains. However, for Dunne and the city authorities, keeping the original memorial site intact was unnecessary, given that the Irish in 1847 "were buried at random over a much larger site, and the relocation will still remain within the area occupied by the sheds in which they lived and died, and perhaps even immediately over one of the burial pits."[87]

The AOH, which had been leading annual pilgrimages to the Stone since the early part of the century, obviously did not share Dunne's dim view of the memorial site, and like most other Irish societies represented on the ISC, remained "opposed in principle to

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[87] Ibid.

the moving of the Irish Stone Monument."[88] In his correspondence with Bishop Maguire, Gerald Carroll, vice-president of the AOH in Canada, emphasized the sanctity of the memorial: "The present site has been held in respect by many generations of Irish people in this city; its sacred and holy character deriving equally from the remains of the dead which it covers and the reverence in which it has been held for many years by the living."[89] By May 1966, it was apparent that most members of the ISC, and the societies it represented, shared Carroll's opinion and agreed that the best way to ensure that the memorial site was "disturbed as little as possible,"[90] was to adopt the "split solution." At a meeting held on 18 May 1966 at the Law Offices of City Hall, T.P. Slattery confirmed the ISC's support of the plan to construct a "new road [that] should run on both sides of the site, thereby converting the latter into a mall."[91]

At the same meeting, Kenneth McKenna announced to those assembled at City Hall that Lucien Saulnier had assured him that he would agree to the split-solution, if the ISC was absolutely convinced it was the best alternative.[92] Though Saulnier still preferred relocating the memorial site, and over the next two weeks engineers for the Planning Department and the Department of Public Works attempted to convince the ISC that the movement of the Stone would not only improve traffic flow but would also offer

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[88] *The Gazette*, 27 May 1966.
[89] Gerald F. Carroll to Right Reverend Kenneth R. Maguire, 16 May 1966, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.
[90] Irish Stone Committee, "Revised Draft of the Resolution of the Irish Stone Committee," 12 May 1966, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.
[91] Minutes of the Irish Stone Committee Meeting held on May 18, 1966, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.
[92] Ibid.

a safer, more accessible, and "more significant" site for the memorial,[93] the City had indicated that it would respect the wishes of the committee representing Montreal's Irish societies. With the ISC's formal announcement on June 13th that it was "adamantly opposed…to any alteration whatsoever of the sacred ground on which the Stone is situated," Montreal's Planning and Public Works departments began figuring out how to make Bridge Street a divided thoroughfare with the memorial site constituting a centre mall. At a city council meeting one week later, Lucien Saulnier announced that a solution had been worked out that would solve the city's traffic issues and leave the "Irish Stone" in its place. Rather than altering the memorial site, "Bridge Street would be changed instead. It would pass on either side of a central dividing mall. On this mall the stone would stand, with its site extended at both ends."[94][95]

Though this decision, in gestation for nine months, was not delivered without its share of complications along the way, the City of Montreal and the ISC proved to be fairly cooperative partners, ultimately compromising on a development plan that met with general approval from both parties. The manner in which the Irish Catholics were treated in their dealings with city authorities throughout the negotiation process reflects their considerable influence in Montreal's political culture. With their dispersal from Griffintown, Goose Village, and to a lesser extent Pointe Saint-Charles, Irish Catholics no longer dominated St. Ann's ward, which since the latter half of the nineteenth century

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[93] "Minutes of a Meeting Held at the Planning Department, re: the Relocation of Bridge Street," 31 May 1966, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.
[94] Collard, *Montreal: The Days*, 195.
[95] *The Montreal Star*, 22 June 1966.

had been "the core of Irish power in Montreal,"[96] but they were still a presence, albeit one that was increasingly diffused, in the political landscape of the city. Mayor Drapeau and Lucien Saulnier understood that Irish Catholics in the city, with the leadership of McKenna, Slattery, and Lynch-Staunton, could organize a lobby and gain significant media attention for their cause. Drapeau's appointment as the chief reviewing officer of the 1967 St. Patrick's parade, arranged in November 1966 when the question of the Stone remained unsettled,[97] also suggests that the mayor was aware of the political rewards that could be reaped from appearing to support Irish interests in the city.

Figure 4.03. Memorial site as median strip, May 2005

[96] *The Gazette*, 16 March 1972.

[97] Don Pidgeon, interview by author, Montreal, 29 August 2006, suspects that the invitation to Mayor Drapeau to assume a prominent role in the parade sped up the process of the City and Irish groups reaching a settlement regarding the Stone.

Though the memorial site was now situated on a traffic island, the ISC in many ways looked upon the City's decision regarding Bridge Street as something of a victory. Not only had Irish Catholic societies managed to prevent the removal of the Stone, the debate about whether the City was entitled to move an Irish historic site had stimulated interest in the history of the Montreal's Irish Catholics and their Famine memorial. Members of Irish Catholic societies, city officials, and the Anglican Bishop had been forced to familiarize themselves with history of the Stone and the events of 1847. Newspapers also brought the story behind the Stone to a wider contingent of Montrealers. *The Gazette*, which consistently expressed its support for maintaining the integrity of the monument, referred to the Stone as a reminder of "one of the greatest examples of human charity this city, or any other city for that matter, has ever known," claiming "rich and poor alike...worked together unselfishly in their efforts to alleviate the suffering and distress of the unfortunate victims."[98] Although prone to such hyperbole, *The Gazette* did devote a lot of ink to recounting the arrival of Famine migrants in Montreal, the heroism of Montrealers (particularly that of the Mayor Mills and those French-Canadian families that adopted Irish Catholic orphans), and the troubled history of the monument to the 1847 typhus victims.[99] French-language newspapers in the city did not follow the story of the monument's proposed removal closely, but did occasionally profile the memorial site, emphasizing the generosity of the orphan takers and the close historic bond that was forged between the Canadien and les irlandais that had endured since 1847.[100] As was the

[98] *The Gazette*, 17 June 1966.
[99] *The Gazette*, 17 June 1966.
[100] *Le Petit Journal*, 7 mars 1965.

case two generations earlier, when the GTR had attempted to expropriate the memorial site, the threat to the monument posed by Expo '67's development had the effect of revitalizing an increasingly moribund memory.

Despite the historical interest generated by the attempted annexation of the memorial site, many Irish Catholics in the city continued to frown upon the conduct of Expo planners as a disturbing sign that the Irish Famine migration had been excised from Canada's national historical narrative. The ISC, while remaining cordial in its negotiations with the City, called for the public censure of the organizers of the main event in Canada's centennial celebration of Confederation for their "selfish, undemocratic and immoral action."[101] It struck many as an insult to Irish Catholics in Canada that the Black Stone, a Montreal landmark predating Confederation that marks "the graves of early settlers,"[102] was "in danger of disappearing in order to observe Canada's centennial anniversary."[103] While there were a handful of Irish Catholics, who attempted to draw meaningful connections between the close proximity of the Irish monument and Montreal's world exhibition,[104] and even those who suggested that part of the Expo site could be designated as "a permanent resting place for the memorial,"[105] most Irish groups in the city expressed displeasure with the directors of Expo 67 for the irreverent treatment of the memorial site.[106]

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[101] Joseph Dunne to K. McKenna, 20 April 1966.
[102] *The Montreal Star*, 15 October 1965.
[103] *The Gazette*, 10 October 1965.
[104] *The Gazette*, 29 May 1966.
[105] *The Montreal Star*, 29 October 1965.
[106] A small group of Irish Montrealers asked the Irish embassy in Ottawa and the Irish Government for financial assistance to operate a pavilion on the site of the Expo called the Irish House—La Maison Irlandaise. However, the Irish Government was not forthcoming with funding

The ISC recognized that it had only succeeded in preventing the displacement of the Stone for the time being, and that the memorial site would likely be threatened again. As long as it remained unrecognized as an historic site by the Commissioner of National Parks in Ottawa and the Quebec Historic Monuments Commission, and reliant upon the Anglican Bishop for its trusteeship and the CN for its maintenance, the memorial site would continue to be susceptible to political and industrial developments in southwest Montreal. Throughout the negotiation process with the ISC, municipal authorities had promised that if the Irish accepted the Stone's relocation, the City would do everything in its power to have it declared "a national historical monument."[107] Not surprisingly, when the decision was taken to leave the monument in its place, the City's interest in securing historic status for the site evaporated. The ISC, however, remain resolved that the only way the memorial site would ever be safe from desecration was to have it designated a national historic site. At its final meeting, the ISC passed a motion that T.P. Slattery, historian for St. Patrick's Society, would "look into the advisability of having the Irish Stone declared a historical monument by the appropriate governmental body and that he initiate proceedings in this direction."[108]

One year later, Slattery wrote to the Historic Sites and Monument Board of Canada (HSMBC) requesting that "the Irish Ship Fever Monument" be "properly

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and the project was abandoned. See *Debates of Dáil Éireann*, Ceisteanna—Questions. Oral Answers. - Irish Pavilion at Montreal Exhibition, vol. 233 (2 April 1968) http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/0233/D.0233.196804020006.html (accessed 13 February 2008).

[107] Paul Casgrain, Assistant City Attorney to the Right Reverend R.K. Maguire, Bishop of Montreal, "Re: Expropriation of Immoveable Situated on the South side of Bridge Street and on the East Side of Britannia Street," 14 April 1966, Anglican Archives of Montreal, Ship Fever Memorial file.

[108] "Minutes of Irish Stone Committee," 13 June 1966, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.

registered and protected as a National Historic Site and Monument."[109] However, despite the assumption among Irish groups that it would not be long before the Stone was "declared a national monument,"[110] Slattery received no response to his letter, and in the decade following Expo little effort was made to follow up this question with the HSMBC. But the issue of the memorial's guardianship would not go away. In the two decades leading up to the Famine sesquicentennial, whenever the Black Stone appeared threatened or neglected, Irish Catholic groups in Montreal would resume lobbying the Federal government to secure its national historic status.

National Historic Slights

That the Famine monument could be ascribed sentience as "living proof that the descendants and survivors of [the Famine]...flourish...in this city,"[111] indicates how difficult it had become to locate historical traces of Montreal's once highly visible Irish Catholic community in Montreal. By the early 1970s, immigration from Ireland to Quebec was negligible.[112] Those Irish Catholics who had been in Montreal for three or four generations had assimilated into the larger Anglophone community. Though a small group of Irish remained in Griffintown and Pointe Saint-Charles,[113] Montrealers of Irish

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[109] T.P Slattery to Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, 25 April 1967, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.
[110] *The Gazette*, 29 May 1966.
[111] *The Gazette*, 22 June 1966.
[112] In 1969, only ninety-five immigrants from the Republic and eighty-one from Northern Ireland arrived in Quebec. See *The Gazette*, 17 March 1972.
[113] One local resident recalled that the Irish were concentrated in the area around Ash, Fortune, and Dublin streets in Pointe Saint-Charles: "Bout 3,000 Irish out here I'd say and they are the focal point for most other groups—citizens' organizations, action committees, and sports' clubs." See *The Gazette*, 17 March 1972.

Catholic descent were widely dispersed throughout the city's west end—in Verdun, LaSalle, Notre Dame de Grâce, Côte des Neiges, St. Laurent, and in the more affluent neighbourhoods of Westmount, Hampstead, and Mount Royal.[114] In Montreal's largely francophone east end, many of those who once belonged to an Irish Catholic working class community in Maisonneuve were now scattered across Anjou, Tétreauville, and Longue Pointe.[115]

With the disintegration of traditional Irish neighbourhoods, most of Montreal's Irish Catholic parishes were either closing or welcoming groups of more recent immigrants.[116] By 1970, Griffintown's population had dwindled to 1,600,[117] and St. Ann's Church, which since 1850 had been an important gathering place for Irish Catholics in the southwest of the city, was demolished, leaving St. Gabriel's Church in Pointe Saint-Charles, which now had a growing number of Polish parishioners, as the "headquarters of much of the cultural, as well as religious, activity in the Irish community of Greater Montreal."[118] St. Patrick's church had by this time also lost much of its traditional Irish congregation, catering now to a wide array of immigrant groups, including Eastern Europeans, Filipinos, and Vietnamese.[119] The struggle over one hundred years earlier to establish Irish Catholic parishes in Montreal helped define Irish relations with their French coreligionists and was central in the construction of Irish

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[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Marvin, "Griffintown: A Brief Chronicle," 8.
[118] *The Gazette*, 17 March 1996.
[119] Hustak, *Saint Patrick's of Montreal*, 128.

Catholic ethnic identity.[120] By the 1970s, the Irish no longer had the community presence or power to dominate the English-speaking Catholic church in Montreal, let alone support their own parishes.

Their departure from neighbourhoods in St. Ann's ward also meant that Irish Catholics no longer elected their own M.P. These changes left some Montrealers of Irish descent, like John Kenny, historian for the United Irish Societies in the early 1970s, nostalgic for the days when they were "a force to be contended with—a strength and a solid group in the community."[121] However, this wistful view of the past exaggerates the extent to which Irish Catholics had constituted a unified group residing in one ethnic enclave. Kenny's conception of the past also downplays the power that accompanied the rising affluence of Irish Catholics in the city during the postwar period. Though there was still a "class cleavage" that separated working class Irish Catholics from their more affluent counterparts,[122] and the perception persisted that there were some "limits to Irish upward mobility,"[123] the majority of Montrealers of Irish Catholic descent were well integrated into the ranks of the city's middle and upper-middle classes. Anti-Catholic sentiment, which had traditionally excluded Irish Catholics from positions in "the stock exchange, the banking business, and most large financial holding companies," had dissipated and Irish Catholics were well placed in all professions and were certainly part

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[120] See Trigger, "The Geopolitics of the Irish-Catholic Parish in Nineteenth-Century Montreal," 559-561.

[121] *The Gazette*, 17 March 1972

[122] Ibid.

[123] *The Gazette*, 18 March 1972

of the city's power structure.[124] By the early 1970s, Montrealers of Irish Catholic descent were less distinctive in Montreal because they had long outgrown the role of the embattled minority and were now part of the larger Anglophone community, one that enjoyed a relatively high standard of living and considerable political influence.

In the decade following Expo, some Montrealers in search of a meaningful way of staying connected to their Irish heritage, looked to the Black Stone as an important monument symbolizing the Famine tragedy and the genesis of their community. A small group of Irish Catholics, led by the AOH, but often including members of other Irish societies, carried on the tradition of the annual commemorative walk to the Stone. At the May 1975 event, John Kenny, the UIS historian who three years earlier had bemoaned the loss of Irish power in the city,[125] spoke to two hundred people who assembled around the monument. He outlined the history of "Black 47" and the "mass transfer of humanity" that brought the Irish to "this hallowed spot." Citing the misconduct of the British authorities, which, he claimed, bartered food for faith, while exporting huge quantities of grain from a starving nation, Kenny's interpretation of the Famine followed a traditional nationalist narrative. His address paid particular attention to the troubled history of the "monument to the Famine victims," making reference to the indignant reaction of the Irish to the GTR's interference in the early part of the twentieth century, the re-interment process in 1942 (at which he was present), and the relatively recent efforts of the Irish societies to preserve the place of the Stone. But Kenny could not hide his disappointment with "how very few" Irish Catholics went to the Stone to "pay homage to [their]

[124] *The Gazette*, 17 March 1972
[125] Ibid.

forebears," while "every man, woman, and child of Irish descent wants to get in on the bandwagon to celebrate" St. Patrick's Day.[126] Less than a decade after the Irish Stone Committee had defended the memorial as an inviolable site held sacred by Irish Catholics in the city, the memories that the Stone was meant to preserve were again at risk of fading into oblivion.

However, another spasm of Irish action in defence of the memorial site was triggered in 1977 when it became apparent that city authorities once again had their sights set on the Black Stone. In this instance, the debate focused on whether the City should be allowed to take on the obligations of the CN (passed on by the GTR) to maintain the site. In February, the City's lawyers contacted Christopher Hollis, Bishop of Montreal, requesting his approval for the transfer of the care of the property from the C.N.R. to the City.[127] According to his administrative officer, Rev. Canon A.E. Hawes, Bishop Hollis was willing to have the City take on this responsibility on three conditions: that he would continue to act as trustee of the site,[128] that work was carried out "to make the site more respectable than it was at the present,"[129] and that any human remains discovered in the process of excavation in the area would be "disposed of in a decent manner."[130] Hawes

[126] John J. Kenny, "Address Given at the Ship Fever Monument, Bridge St, Montreal," 25 May 1975, Don Pidgeon's Papers, Montreal, QC (hereafter cited as Pidgeon Papers).
[127] Jean-Paul Langlois à Canon A.E. Hawes, "Sujet: Vente par CN à la Ville de Montréal—Partie du lot 507-69-Quartier Ste-Anne," 16 février 1977, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.
[128] Rev. Canon A.E. Hawes to Mr. H.H. Tees, 14 April 1977, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.
[129] Rev. Canon A.E. Hawes to Patrick Fitzgerald, 15 April 1977, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.
[130] Mr. Herbert H. Tees to Mr. Jean-Paul Langlois, "Re: Sale by Canadian National Railways to the City of Montreal of part of Lot 507-69 St. Antoine Ward," 28 April 1977, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.

then contacted Patrick Fitzgerald of the AOH, asking him to bring the matter before the Irish Societies, "so that if there is any other concerns which you have, they may be reflected in the arrangements that are made between the Bishop and the City of Montreal"[131]

Representatives from the AOH, St. Patrick's Society, and the UIS were understandably wary of the City's motivation for attempting to secure jurisdiction over maintenance of the memorial site, and reminded the Anglican Bishop, Reginald Hollis, of "the anguish that the City Fathers…[cause] the Irish community each time someone gets the notion to have [the Stone] moved in the name of 'improvement'"[132] They urged the Bishop to resist granting his approval to the City's proposal.[133] T.P. Slattery, who ten years earlier had attempted to have the Stone registered as a national historic site, believed that the site would be at less risk of removal or neglect under the care of the CN. Slattery recognized that while "the City of Montreal would be subject to provincial jurisdiction," "the CN are subject to Federal jurisdiction and the Board of Railway Commissioners for Canada."[134] Even though the CN was failing miserably at keeping the memorial site "in reasonable and acceptable condition," as Denis Leyne pointed out in a letter to the Anglican Bishop, Irish Catholics opposed the proposed transfer of

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[131] Rev. Canon A.E. Hawes to Patrick Fitzgerald, 15 April 1977.
[132] Rev. Thomas D. McEntee to His Lordship Christopher Hollis, Bishop of Montreal, 23 June 1977, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.
[133] Frank Rooney, Provincial Secretary AOH, to the Right Reverend Reginald Hollis, 21 June 1977, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.
[134] T.P. Slattery to Rev. Canon A.E. Hawes, 18 May 1977, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.

responsibility for maintenance of the site to the City.[135] In the absence of HSMBC protection, Irish groups would cling as long as possible to the last federal ruling that was passed to protect the memorial site: the 1911 decision by the Board of Railway Commissioners for Canada that obliged the GTR (and subsequently the CN) to maintain the site in perpetuity.

In May 1977, T.P. Slattery once again requested that the "Irish Immigrant Monument" be registered and protected as a National Historical Site and Monument with the HSMBC."[136] While awaiting a response from the ministry responsible for heritage designations, Irish groups turned to the Anglican Bishop once again for his support in safeguarding the monument, this time by lobbying the federal government to have the Stone declared a national historic site. In the interim, the AOH sought Bishop Hollis' approval to add a plaque to the memorial site, "identifying this location as the 'Irish Immigrant Stone.'"[137] Anglican authorities, perhaps uneasy with such an explicit acknowledgement of the Irishness of the site, ignored this request, but did assure Frank Rooney, Montreal's AOH president, that the Bishop would "pressure…the authorities to have this site declared a national monument."[138]

By September, however, it was made clear that the HSMBC did not consider the Black Stone suitable for national commemoration. In a letter to Slattery, the Minister of

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[135] Denis Leyne to Rev. Canon A.E. Hawes, 29 June 1977, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.
[136] T.P. Slattery to Hon. Warren A. Allman, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, 18 May 1977, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.
[137] Frank Rooney, Provincial Secretary AOH, to the Right Reverend Reginald Hollis, 21 June 1977.
[138] Canon A.E. Hawes, Administrative Officer to the Bishop of Montreal to Mr. Frank Rooney, 3 August 1977, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.

Indian and Northern Affairs, J. Hugh Faulkner, explained that in accordance with the National Historic Sites' program items and themes related to disaster are not suitable for commemoration. Faulkner believed that "The Irish Ship Fever Monument" marked "a disaster in that it commemorates the many Irish immigrants who, having contracted fever aboard ship while on their passage to Canada, died during the passage or after their arrival." Such a disaster, according to Faulkner, "precludes an active involvement by Parks Canada in this matter."[139] Responding on behalf of the St. Patrick's Society, Slattery disagreed with Faulkner's characterization of the site: "Merely to say that it marks a disaster is far from complete and does not really describe it. In essence it is a cemetery. It commemorates an event of national and international character and bears the early pre-Confederation date of 1847-48." Despite Slattery's insistence that "the monument and cemetery have an historical, national and sacred character which justly merits registration and protection under...[Parks Canada's] jurisdiction,"[140] Faulkner ended the correspondence, leaving Irish Catholics who had a vested interest in the Stone once again in the unenviable position of having to continually monitor the City's development plans in Pointe Saint-Charles, while badgering the CN and the Anglican Bishop to maintain the memorial site.

The memorial site, now doubling as a traffic island on a busy thoroughfare, periodically incurred damages courtesy of wayward cars and overzealous snow ploughs, which kept a number of concerned Irish Catholics busy reminding the CN of its

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[139] J. Hugh Faulkner, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs to T.P. Slattery, 4 November 1977, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.
[140] T.P. Slattery to Hon. Mr. J. Hugh Faulkner, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, 9 November 1977, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.

responsibilities regarding the site. Denis Leyne was particularly vigilant in 1979 and 1980, visiting the memorial and letting the Railway and the Anglican Bishop know of damages to the gate and the fence enclosing the site.[141] When nothing was done to remedy the situation, even after repeated communiqués to the site's Anglican trustee and the CN's Real Estate Division, Leyne announced his intention to "muster the Irish Community to bring pressure on the Railway at an early date, to correct the situation."[142] Taking Leyne's cue, Rev. M.A. Hughes, Administrative Officer to the Bishop, increased the pressure on the CN to live up to its obligations, but still nothing was done to clean up the memorial site.[143] Faced with the fact that their proprietorial stake in the Stone had no basis in law, Irish groups in the city were once again kept at arm's length from what many deemed Montreal's most important Irish historic site.

While there was little else the Irish community could do to spur the CN into action, the Anglican Bishop was eventually able to use his influence in the ongoing negotiations over the sale of the memorial site from the CN to the City to compel the Railway to repair a large stretch of fencing surrounding the Stone. Hollis would only consent to the sale if the CN agreed to repair the site to his satisfaction within three months of the signing of the deed of sale.[144] The Bishop also decided that the transfer of ownership of the site from the CN to the City was contingent on two other conditions:

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[141] Denis Leyne to Rev. Canon A.E. Hawes, Administrative Officer to the Bishop of Montreal, 13 June 1979, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.
[142] Denis Leyne to Rev. Canon M.A. Hughes, Administrative Officer to the Bishop of Montreal, 29 August 1980, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.
[143] Rev. Canon Malcolm A. Hughes, Administrative Officer to the Bishop of Montreal to Mr. Gerard Desforges, CN, Real Estate Division, 3 December 1980, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.
[144] Rev. Canon M.A. Hughes to H.H. Tees, 13 May 1981, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.

any human remains unearthed in the course of excavation in the proximity of the memorial would be "disposed of en tout [sic] dignité," and an annual meeting would take place at the beginning of April between municipal and Anglican representatives to determine what repairs might be necessary for the City to carry out to maintain the site.[145] Shortly after the deed of sale was finally signed in August 1982, the site was repaired to the Bishop's satisfaction, but Irish Catholic groups remained wary of the City's new role as owners of the memorial site.

With the publication of its master plan for urban development in 1985, Montreal's municipal council once again gave Irish Catholics in the city reason to fear for the future of the memorial site. The City's development plan designated the Irish 'Fever cemetery' a light industry zone. While it was unclear what the City's intentions for the site were, Irish groups took it as a clear sign of disrespect by the City for the "Irish cemetery."[146] Two years later, the site was subject to yet another slight. Without consent from the City, the Anglican Bishop, or Irish groups, the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering went onto the memorial site and installed a cairn and plaque (just fifty feet from the Stone) commemorating the construction of the Victoria Bridge. It would take seven years for Irish groups in the city to persuade the City, which assumed responsibility for the engineers' monument, to find an alternative location away from the Irish Stone.[147] For some in the Irish Catholic community, these affronts to the site were part of the City's

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[145] H.H. Tees to Reverend Canon Malcolm A. Hughes, Administrative Officer, The Synod of the Diocese of Montreal, 23 July 1982, Ship Fever Memorial file, Anglican Archives of Montreal.
[146] *The Gazette*, 17 March 1988.
[147] Don Pidgeon to R.E. Crysler, Chair National History Committee, 3 March 1994, Pidgeon Papers.

growing track record of failing to pay "apt tribute" and duly "recognize its Irish cemetery near the Victoria Bridge."[148]

The negligence of municipal authorities when it came to the Irish historic site contrasted starkly with their efforts overseeing the city's hugely popular St. Patrick's Day parade. An estimated half million Montrealers, from all ethnic backgrounds, watched the 1988 St. Patrick's Day parade, which, according to *The Gazette*, even featured "a gaudy Ukrainian float." Though some Irish in Montreal, "troubled by all the stereotypes," looked upon the annual parade as an event that was particularly susceptible to "shallow shamroguery," it is not hard to imagine why Montrealers, and their elected representatives, would sooner choose to publicly demonstrate their Irishness in the celebratory parade through downtown Montreal on March 17th than the sombre pilgrimage to the memorial site in Pointe Saint-Charles on the last Sunday of May.[149] But there were Irish Catholics in the city that continued to look to the Black Stone as the most poignant site from which to grasp the city's profound historical and cultural connections with Ireland. For those who were already straining to find meaningful ways to assert an identity in an increasingly multi-ethnic city, the City's disregard for the Stone, seen by some as "one of the country's most eloquent monuments," was galling.[150]

While most Irish Catholics in Montreal in the late 1980s who had even a glancing acquaintance with the history of Famine migration to the city considered the Irish cemetery in Pointe Saint-Charles a sacred site, they did not all hold the actual Stone

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[148] *The Gazette*, 17 March 1988.
[149] *The Gazette*, 17 March 1988.
[150] *The Gazette*, 2 July 1988.

monument marking the site in such high esteem. The cumulative frustration of not having had control over this cherished historic site led some to advocate that Irish groups should ensure that "Governments…be prevailed upon to support a more dignified memorial to the Irish presence in Canada." In 1989, *Nuacht: Bulletin De La Société St-Patrick De Montréal* proposed moving Bridge Street so that "a suitable Irish Garden of Remembrance," which would cover what it claimed was "the whole area of the Cemetery," could be cultivated next to the Stone. It was proposed that all branches of government work "in concert with the Irish community, combine resources and dignify the huge Irish contribution to Montreal, Quebec and Canada with a suitable Garden of Remembrance." Despite claiming that the cemetery was "the Wailing Wall of our People," *La Société St-Patrick De Montréal* believed that "the epitaph of those lying under Bridge Street" could only be written once a truly Irish memorial was at last installed on the site.[151] As the sesquicentennial of the Famine approached, Irish Catholics in Montreal continued to consider the 1847 burial ground a sacred site worthy of preservation; however, they remained divided, as they had been since the commemoration of the Famine jubilee in 1897, over whether the Ship Fever Monument was a fitting, or adequately Irish Catholic, memorial to those who fled from Famine in Ireland and died in Montreal's fever sheds in 1847.

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[151] "Stone Again in Danger—Irish Cemetery Site 'Suitable for Light Industry," *Nuacht: Bulletin de la Société St-Patrick De Montréal*, February 1989, 10.

The Stone Overthrown

These perennial questions about Famine commemoration in Montreal were suddenly brought into sharper focus in March 1992 when a controversy arose over how Grosse-Île was to be constructed as a national historic site.[152] With its publication of an 87-page development proposal for Grosse-Île, Parks Canada recommended that immigration to Canada via Quebec City be the main thematic focus of the commemoration, celebrating the achievements of nineteenth and early twentieth century European immigrants who "built the country by bringing to it their courage, hard work, and culture."[153] In a move that was perceived by many Irish-Canadians as a politically motivated attempt to fabricate a Canadian counterpart to Ellis Island in a province that had little faith in federalism and many misgivings about the official policy of multiculturalism, the historic

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[152] Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, "Excerpts from the Minutes of the HSMBC," June 1984, 24. In May 1974 the HSMBC recognized the national historic significance of the island, recommending the installation of a commemorative plaque. Six years later, another memorial was unveiled. The plaque bears an inscription that, without specifically mentioning the Irish or any other nationality, describes the quarantine station and some of the efforts made to prevent the spread of cholera and typhus. As early as 1984, when the HSMBC recommended to Parks Canada that the island be declared a national historic site, it was suggested that it "should not focus solely on the experience of the Irish on the island." But it was not until August 1988 when the Ministry of Agriculture transferred ownership of buildings and land to the Canadian Parks Service that Grosse-Île officially became a national historic site.

[153] Environment Canada Parks Service, *Grosse-Île Development Concept* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1992), 47. The HSMBC gives Parks Canada "impartial and expert advice on matters relating to historical commemoration and decides on those aspects of Canadian history that it considers worthy of designation of national historic significance." It "will not recommend that religious and ethnic groups per se be specifically commemorated except where their contributions are of national historic significance." Parks Canada's mandate is to use this advice and communicate history to the public in a fun, accessible, and celebratory way. Its ultimate goal, however, is to instill national unity through the telling of national stories, which means that "uniqueness or rarity are not, in themselves, evidence of national historic significance." See Parks Canada, *Guiding Principles and Operational Policies* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1994), 72-74.

site was designated *Canada: Land of Welcome and Hope*.[154] This celebration of immigration as the common historical experience signifying membership in the national community left little room at the national historic site for an examination of the history of the Irish immigration in 1847, the experience of quarantine, and the typhus epidemic that left thousands of Irish Famine migrants buried on Grosse-Île.

Despite its promise to allow the island, likened to an "open-air history book," to "tell its own story,"[155] Parks Canada had chosen to omit the Irish historical experience on Grosse-Île. While the heritage agency's proposal did acknowledge the "particular significance that Grosse-Île holds for the descendants of those thousands of unfortunates," no reference was made to the island's mass graves or how they might be integrated into the commemorative site. Irish-Canadians were disturbed most by two statements in the Development Proposal that revealed Parks Canada's intention to downplay the history of the Irish on the island: "there should not be too much emphasis on the tragic aspects of the history of Grosse-Île;" and "the painful events of 1847, which have often been overemphasized in the past, need to be put back into perspective, without robbing them of their importance."[156] These assertions, which suggest that Parks Canada's historians were well versed in revisionist readings of the Famine, had the

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[154] Raymond Herbert, "Francophone Perspectives on Multiculturalism," in *Twenty Years of Multiculturalism: Successes & Failures*, ed. Stella Hryniuk (Winnipeg: St. John's College Press, 1992), 65. Despite assuming an unbiased position when developing national historic sites, the HSMBC and Parks Canada tend to avoid commemorating aspects of Canada's past that do not jibe with their nation-building agenda. In an overview of the historiography of Canadian public history, Fritz Pannekoek, "Who Matters? Public History and the Invention of the Canadian Past," *Acadiensis* 29, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 208, argues that "possibly the most conservative history in Canada is that sustained by the cautious intellectual bureaucracy employed by Parks Canada's National Historic Sites."

[155] Environment Canada Parks Service, *Grosse-Île Development Concept*, 69.

[156] Ibid., 69, 62.

unintended effect of enlivening interest in the island and the history of Famine-era migration to Canada and spurring a series of protests against Parks Canada's commemorative plans. In the months following the publication of the development plan, Irish-Canadian groups wrote newspaper editorials condemning Parks Canada; organized a nationwide postcard campaign imploring the Canadian Government for special recognition of the thousands of Irish buried in mass graves; and sent hundreds of letters to the Parks Service, as well as three petitions garnering some 23,855 signatures gathered from across Canada, the United States, and Ireland, opposing the development proposal.[157]

While Parks Canada was obliged to offer the Canadian public opportunities to participate in the planning of national historic sites, the outcry raised by Irish groups against the proposal for Grosse-Île forced the heritage agency to quickly organize a series of public hearings in Quebec. In May 1992, "two hundred members of the Irish Canadian community," including representatives from the AOH, St. Patrick's Society, and the United Irish Societies, convened in Montreal to present briefs to Parks Canada.[158] Most of the participants took exception with Parks Canada's plan and demanded that the Irish dimension of Grosse-Île's history, which the island's Celtic Cross and mass graves already put in plain view, should be given full commemorative treatment by Parks Canada. There was a general consensus that the events of 1847 on Grosse-Île, which were

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[157] Parks Canada, *Grosse-Île National Historic Site: Report on the Public Consultation Program* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, March 1994), 9-10.
[158] Ibid. 9.

viewed as a formative chapter in Canada's history, should be the main focus of the commemoration.

In response to these briefs, and others delivered in public hearings held in Quebec City and Montmagny,[159] Parks Canada published a supplement to its original proposal, attempting to allay the anger and fears of Irish Canadians. It acknowledged a vagueness on points concerning the island's Irish history, recognized the importance of the island as "a shrine for the Irish people," promised to take care of the burial grounds and the Celtic Cross, and withdrew the moniker *Canada: Land of Welcome and Hope*.[160] Although Parks Canada attempted to quell the protests of Irish-Canadians by exhibiting a heightened awareness of the Irish dimension of the island's history, the changes to the development plan introduced in *The Supplement to the Development Concept* were mostly cosmetic, as the original commemorative theme of immigration and the secondary story of the quarantine station were reaffirmed. Eager to avoid the thorny question of what prompted the Irish to emigrate during the Famine, Parks Canada confirmed its decision to commemorate the island "from the perspective of Canadian history" rather than "the perspective of the history of each country whose emigrants Canada welcomed."[161]

Irish-Canadian lobbyists, however, were not so easily appeased, and the participants in the Montreal hearings convinced Parks Canada to arrange another round of

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[159] Situated on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, Montmagny is one of several points of departure for tours of Grosse-Île.
[160] Environment Canada Parks Service, *Grosse-Île National Historic Site: Supplement to the Development Concept* (Canada: Minister of Supply and Services, November 1992), 6.
[161] Ibid. 20.

public hearings in 1993 to be held in Vancouver, Fredericton, Charlottetown and Toronto. Most of the briefs submitted in these cities called for the Canadian government to formulate a new commemorative plan for the national historic site that would focus on the Irish history of the island. However, beyond this general consensus, the transcripts of the public hearings also reveal what had already become evident during the public consultations held in Quebec: Irish Canadians supported a range of commemorative strategies and perspectives that were not entirely reconcilable. Despite the suggestion by Michael Quigley, president of Action Grosse-Île, the umbrella organization that spearheaded the movement to make the Famine the central theme of the Grosse-Île commemoration, that Irish Canadians were unified regarding Grosse-Île, they were not of one mind about its historical significance.

Citing the Famine migration as the formative historical event for the Irish in Canada (even if their personal connections to Canada were established long before or after 1847), many participants in the public hearings looked upon the island's Irish cemetery as a sacrosanct national symbol and took great offence at Parks Canada's attempt to downplay its historic significance. In an effort to emphasize the importance of the Famine as a watershed in Irish and Canadian history, a number of the briefs submitted during the hearings made reference to formative texts in the Irish nationalist canon, including Cecil Woodham Smith's, *The Great Hunger* and John Mitchel's *The Last Conquest of Ireland (Perhaps)*.[162] Taking exception with what they believed to be Parks

[162] Action Grosse-Île, The Irish Committee, and The St. Patrick's Society attached bibliographies, which included nationalist histories, as part of their briefs submitted to Parks Canada during the public consultation process.

Canada's anti-nationalist political predisposition, apparent in its use of the words "British" to describe the Irish and "Londonderry" rather than Derry, and its reference to the Great Famine as "the Great Potato Famine," some Irish Canadians took it upon themselves to set the historical record straight.[163] If Parks Canada was going to deploy language in service of its political agenda and downplay the horrors of the Famine that visited the quarantine island, they would convey the magnitude of the tragedy in the strongest terms. Thus, many briefs submitted during the public hearings were replete with references to the Famine as "genocide," "ethnic cleansing," and "holocaust," with one Irish group in Montreal going so far as to claim Grosse-Île as "our Treblinka."[164]

There were many Irish Canadians, who shared Michael Quigley's opinion that it was incumbent upon Parks Canada to not only use the national historic site to explore the causes and consequences of the Famine but also to establish "the inescapable indictment of British responsibility for suffering, disease, starvation and deaths."[165] Some participants in the hearings went even a step further, comparing British misgovernment during the Famine era and in contemporary Northern Ireland. In its brief, the Irish Solidarity Committee of Vancouver offered its support to the Irish Republican Movement. It argued that the Canadian public has been kept ignorant of what really happened to Irish Catholics under British rule 150 years earlier and that the situation has

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[163] Pádraig Breandán Ó Laighin (on behalf of St. Patrick's Society of Montréal), "Grosse Île: The Irish Island," in *Briefs Presented in Montreal, May 20* 1992. Ó Laighin is a sociologist who in 1992 formed the General Assembly of Irish Organisations, an umbrella group representing thirty-one Irish organizations in Quebec that was active in lobbying Parks Canada to focus on Grosse-Île as an Irish Famine site.
[164] Tara Golf Association Inc., "Brief to the Environment Canada Parks Service Commission on the Grosse Ile Development Project," in *Briefs Presented in Montreal, May 20, 1992*, 4.
[165] Michael Quigley (on behalf of Action Grosse Île), "Presentation to Canadian Parks Service," in *Briefs Presented in Toronto, April 13, 1993*, 5-8.

only changed slightly since. Clearly, no matter how much Parks Canada wanted to keep contemporary Irish politics out of its commemoration on Grosse-Île, there was a contingent of Irish Canadians that was determined to use the national historic site to draw connections between the policies of the British government that led the Irish to the quarantine station in 1847 and those that they believed continued to subjugate Irish Catholics in Northern Ireland.[166]

Against this tide of Irish nationalist sentiment, there was a small but insistent Canadian countercurrent. Cecil Houston, a historical geographer specializing in Irish migration to Canada, presented a brief supporting Parks Canada's proposal. He aimed to expose "the political motivation at work" behind the suggestion that "the Famine constitutes a Holocaust or the consequence of genocide." This Irish nationalist notion, according to Houston, "denies diversity, suffocates learning and freezes the future."[167] Given "the aberrant character" of the 1847 migration in the larger context of Irish migration to British North America, and the millions of European immigrants who passed

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[166] Denis Leyne, who since the mid-1960s had figured prominently in the negotiations with the Anglican Bishop and the CN over the future of the Black Stone, helped form Action Grosse Ile. Shortly after presenting his brief to Parks Canada in May 1992, Leyne (who argued that Parks Canada's plan was a political whitewash) was arrested in New York and charged with participating in an Arizona smuggling ring that attempted to ship bomb-detonators to the IRA in Northern Ireland. He went on a six-day hunger strike to protest his detention and the government's delay in allowing him to post bail. He was acquitted of all charges in April 1994. Three years later, the Grosse-Île commemoration even attracted the attention of a group of dissident Republicans in Ireland. However, the Canadian High Commissioner in London prevented Ruairí Ó Brádaigh (leader of the splinter group Republican Sinn Féin) from attending the sesquicentennial events on Grosse-Île by denying him permission to board a flight to Canada.
[167] Cecil Houston, "A Personal Brief on the Subject of the Grosse Île Heritage Site, in *Briefs Presented in Toronto*, April 15, 1993, 4. Houston's perspective was supported by historian Bruce S. Elliot, "The Place of Grosse Île in the Story of Immigration," in *Briefs Presented in Toronto*, April 15, 1993, who not only stressed the historical complexities of Irish immigration, but also noted the diverse experiences of English, Welsh, German, and Italian immigrants to Canada.

through the quarantine facilities on Grosse-Île over the course of the nineteenth century, Houston saw nothing wrong with using the commemoration to promote multiculturalism through the story of European migration to Canada.[168]

Houston's endorsement of Parks Canada's plan to circumvent the Irish story of Famine migration was inconsistent with most of the contributions to the public consultation process, even from those outside the strident constituency of Irish Canadians invoking a nationalist reading of the Famine. Most participants in the hearings believed that Parks Canada should use the national historic site to highlight the Irish experience on the quarantine island in 1847 and explore the full Irish context of Famine-era emigration to Canada. For many, the point was not to incite Republicanism through Famine remembrance or dwell on British culpability for failing to prevent Irish mass mortality, but to use the commemoration on Grosse-Île "as a reminder to Canadians that the fight against discrimination, misery and inhumanity is a battle…not yet won."[169] Parks Canada was thus encouraged to apply the lessons learned from the Irish tragedy of 1847 to combat present-day Famine and inequity. This blend of "soft-focus" Irish nationalism and social activism, whose most influential advocate was then Irish President Mary Robinson, informed a significant number of the briefs submitted during the consultation process.[170] As the debate continued over how to commemorate Grosse-Île, Robinson's

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[168] Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *Irish Emigration and Canadian Settlement: Patterns, Links, and Letters* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 218.
[169] Jim Peterson, Liberal MP, "Environment Canada Parks Service, Grosse Ile Public Consultation," in *Briefs Presented in Toronto, April 14, 1993*, 2.
[170] Edna Longley, "Northern Ireland: Commemoration, Elegy, Forgetting," in *History and Memory in Modern Ireland,* ed. Ian McBride (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 232, used the phrase "soft-focus" to describe the moderately nationalist disposition of historians who became involved in Ireland's sesquicentennial events and supported Mary Robinson's commemorative agenda.

commemorative mission to unite the Irish diaspora to use their tragic history to relieve suffering among those less privileged in the contemporary world became increasingly popular among Irish Canadians and would ultimately help establish Grosse-Île as arguably "the most important and evocative Great Famine site on earth."[171]

While Parks Canada's consultations and the extensive media coverage that the controversy received in Canada, Ireland and throughout the diaspora put Grosse-Île in the limelight as Canada's Famine site, Montreal's Famine memorial was also somewhat illumined in the process. In the hearings held outside of Quebec there were references to the arrival of Famine migrants in Montreal. Not surprisingly, many participants at the Montreal hearings also focused on the thousands of Irish who left Grosse-Île and tragically ended up in "the fever sheds at Point St. Charles," while also celebrating the heroism of Mayor Mills, and the generosity of French-Canadian families who took in orphans.[172] The Comité Québec-Irlande referred to the persistence of Famine memory within "the Irish community in Montréal," and promised to "join the Ancient Order of Hibernians and other groups…on its annual march to the Black Rock in commemoration of those who died of typhus in the sheds along the St. Lawrence River in Pointe St. Charles in 1847."[173]

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[171] Don Mullan, "The Importance of Grosse-Ile to the Irish Worldwide," in *Briefs Presented in Montreal, May 20, 1992*, 6. Mullan served as Director of AFrI (Action from Ireland) from 1979-93. Mullan was instrumental in developing the Great Famine Project, which produced numerous publications and oversaw commemorative events in Ireland and throughout the diaspora. In 1997, he published *Eyewitness Bloody Sunday: The Truth* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1997), which helped renew interest in the events of 1972, leading to Tony Blair's decision to open a new Bloody Sunday inquiry.

[172] Norita Fleming, in *Briefs Presented in Montreal, May 20, 1992*, 4.

[173] Georges Bériault for the Comité Québec-Irlande, "Brief on 'Grosse Île," in *Briefs Presented in Montreal, May 20,* 1992, 6.

However, many of the participants in the hearings, including those from Montreal, acknowledged that Grosse-Île was of special significance for the Irish in Canada and throughout the Irish world. The Montreal Gaelic Athletic Association boasted in its brief of how in 1965 and 1966 it was "instrumental in successfully rallying support against the City of Montreal's proposal to remove the Ship Fever Monument (The Irish Stone)." The current executive and membership was now keen on ensuring the commemoration of the Irish Famine experience on Grosse-Île, which it considered "an even greater hallowed spot." [174] The McGill Irish Society "join[ed] with Montreal's Irish community in demanding a complete revision of the proposal to more accurately represent the meaning of Grosse Isle," a site that it believed held "a special place in the consciousness of Irish people throughout the world."[175] In support of its commemoration as a national historic site, Michael Callaghan, director of the St. Patrick's Society of Montreal, insisted that "Grosse-Île is sacred to all those of Irish descent in North America," a grandiose claim indeed, but one that would have been more outlandish had it been made on behalf of his city's own Famine site.[176] Even Don Pidgeon, the historian for Montreal's United Irish Societies, who would soon become the leading advocate of maintaining Montreal's memorial and having it recognized as a national historic site, acknowledged the primacy of the island's Celtic Cross over his city's Black Stone: "Irish people all over the world

[174] Gaelic Athletic Association, "Brief to Canadian Parks Service on the Proposed Development Concept for Grosse Ile," in *Briefs Presented in Montreal, May 20, 1992*, 1.
[175] McGill Irish Society, "Submission to Environment Canada on the Subject of Grosse Îsle National Historical Site," in *Briefs Presented in Montreal, May 20, 1992*, 4.
[176] *The Toronto Star*, 12 June 1992.

relate to Grosse Isle as the main monument to the tragedy of famine, deportation from Ireland, and death caused by the deplorable catastrophe placed upon them in 1847."[177]

With its imposing Celtic Cross, funded and constructed in 1909 by Irish Catholics, and its bucolic setting interrupted by the visible mounds marking the 1847 gravesite, the island had the requisite air of gravitas and appearance of authenticity for an Irish Famine site—a cachet that had always eluded the site of the black boulder in Pointe Saint-Charles. Though subject to its own share of desecration over the years, particularly during the Second World War when it was a testing ground for biochemical weapons, the former quarantine island had always been less susceptible to the kinds of urban political and commercial pressures that continually threatened to displace Montreal's memorial site over the course of the twentieth century.

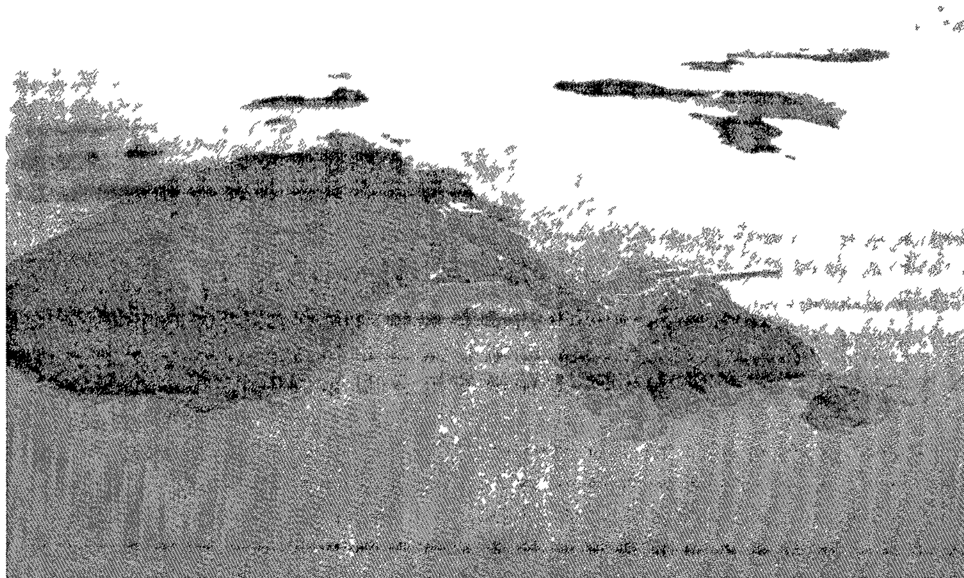

Figure 4.04. Aerial view of Grosse-Île. Source: Parks Canada.

[177] Donald Pidgeon (on behalf of United Irish Societies of Montreal Inc.), in *Briefs Presented in Montreal, May 20, 1992*,

Figure 4.05. Grosse-Île's Celtic Cross, August 2009

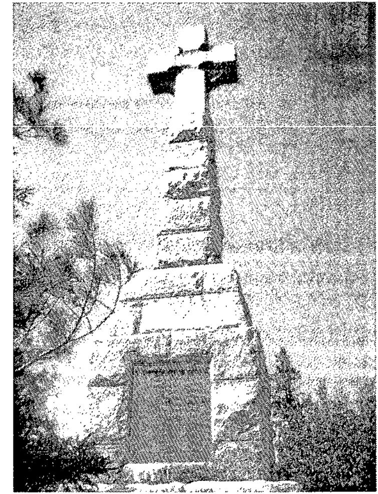

Figure 4.06. The Celtic Cross, August 2009

Figure 4.07. Crosses marking the Grosse-Île burial site, August 2006

Shortly after Parks Canada completed its public hearing in Montreal, the annual walk to the Stone in Pointe Saint-Charles, referred to by *The Gazette* as "one of the least known of our city's annual events," drew no more than its usual two hundred participants.[178] Those who did attend were quick to notice that the Stone's pedestal was disintegrating and the memorial site was in a state of disrepair.[179] It also soon became apparent to Irish groups in Montreal that the shabbiness of the site presaged a threat more serious. During public meetings held in September and October 1992, the City of Montreal released documents outlining proposed changes to the memorial site and the surrounding area. In one pamphlet, *Résumé du Plan d'Urbanismes*, there were indications that the area between Bridge and Riverside Streets would be reconfigured. On the map *Affectation du Sol Arrondisement Sud-Ouest*, "the area on Bridge Street at the Victoria Bridge including the Memorial Stone is noted as an area of expropriation and infrastructure."[180] As planners once more circled the site in anticipation of redeveloping the southwest sector of Montreal, the city's Famine memorial was again in jeopardy.

While it is overstating the case to say that in 1992 the city's "Irish community sprang into action," the realization that the land around the Famine site was targeted for development, which came just as Irish groups were mobilizing across Canada to fight for recognition of Grosse-Île's historic significance, did motivate a number of influential Montrealers of Irish descent to demand that the Black Stone site be maintained and

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[178] *The Gazette*, 6 June 1992.
[179] *The Gazette*, 16 March 2003.
[180] Don Pidgeon to Mayor Jean Doré, 1 November 1992, Pidgeon Papers.

protected in perpetuity.[181] Denis Leyne, before his arrest in 1992 on suspicion of participating in an IRA weapons smuggling ring, wrote a series of letters to the Anglican Bishop (a correspondence that had begun almost thirty years earlier) regarding the fate of the memorial site. Pádraig Ó Laighin, chair of the General Assembly of Irish Organizations in Montreal, also began pressuring city authorities to prevent what he considered, "the defilement of one of Montréal's most evocative historic sites."[182] In November 1992, the President of the St. Patrick's Society, Dr. Gus Ó Gormáin, wrote to Mayor Jean Doré calling for improvements to be made to the memorial site.[183] The most persistent lobbyist, though, was Don Pidgeon, the historian for the United Irish Societies who led a three-year campaign to improve and preserve the site. Following Ó Gormáin's lead, Pidgeon composed his own letter to the mayor, recounting the history of the site that made it "sacred to the Irish Community," referring to the sacrifice made in 1847 by Doré's predecessor, Mayor John Mills and insisting that the City's "plans for change in the area of the Memorial Stone on Bridge St." were unacceptable.[184]

Though he received assurance from the mayor's office in February 1993 that no changes would be made in the immediate area of the monument, Pidgeon called for negotiations with the City, Canadian National Railway, and the Anglican Church to ensure that a series of improvements would be made to the Famine site in Pointe Saint-

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[181] *The Gazette*, 21 May 1996.
[182] Pádraig Breandán Ó Laighin to Madame Julie Boivan, Architecte—Agent de Développement Culturel, 14 September 1994, Pidgeon Papers. Ó Laighin was instrumental in persuading the City of Montreal to change the name of the street on which the memorial stands to rue des Irlandais.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Don Pidgeon to Mayor Jean Doré, 2 November 1992, Pidgeon Papers.

Charles.[185] He enlisted the help of Canon Philip Bristow of the Anglican Diocese of Montreal (in whose trust the site was still held), who reminded the CN and the City of Montreal of their "joint interest...regarding the care of the property."[186] Pidgeon and Bristow sought a reaffirmation from city officials of their commitment to the overall maintenance of the site and their promise to work with Canada Cement Lefarge, owners of the site on the east side of the Victoria Bridge access road, to establish a parking area and pedestrian crosswalk for visitors to the site. At a meeting in the CN offices in June 1993, Pidgeon and Bristow also leaned on the Railway, proposing that it construct a new fence around the perimeter of the site, restore the pedestal, and remove a nearby billboard which displayed "advertisements...inappropriate to overlook a sacred site."[187]

By May 1994, the CN had erected a 551-foot fence surrounding the memorial site, and completed repairs on the Stone's crumbling pedestal, to which it added hooks for the hanging of commemorative wreaths. Although Irish groups in the city were still pressuring the CN to do more to convince MediaCom, the operator of a billboard overlooking the memorial site, "to choose more appropriate ads," the Railway was quite accommodating, complying with most of the requests made by Irish groups. It was the City of Montreal that was holding up the memorial site's rehabilitation.[188] By the time of the annual walk to the Stone in May 1994, nothing concrete had come of the promise made three months earlier by Mayor Jean Doré and city officials to consider relocating

[185] Don Pidgeon, *Update on the Black Stone Monument Lot*, October 1994, Pidgeon Papers.
[186] Rev. Canon Philip R. Bristow to M. Jacques Dionne, "Re: The Irish Stone—Victoria Bridge," 7 July 1993, Pidgeon Papers.
[187] Ibid.
[188] *The Gazette*, 26 May 1994.

the Engineers' monument from the site and to look into providing parking and a crosswalk for visitors to the memorial. Don Pidgeon complained of how dangerous it was to get near the Stone, as visitors were forced to leave their cars "in the parking lot at Club Price and make a run for it."[189] Increasingly frustrated with the City's uncooperativeness, Pidgeon announced to *The Gazette* that city officials should not underestimate his own obstinacy and the extent to which "Irish people have a stake in this monument and its place in the history of the city."[190]

Convinced that further pressure would have to be applied before the city administration would address the concerns of Irish Montrealers regarding the memorial site, Pidgeon "went public with his complaints about the Stone's deteriorating condition."[191] He contacted various media outlets in Montreal, offering a potted history of the site and cataloguing the various ways in which the City of Montreal had failed to fulfill its obligation to maintain what he deemed the city's most important Irish historic site.[192] This strategy proved successful in capturing the attention of Helen Fotopoulos, intercultural affairs adviser in Mayor Doré's Montreal Citizens' Movement and candidate for councillor in Mile End. Fotopoulos moved quickly to appease Pidgeon and other representatives of Irish groups in the city. By October 1994, the City had removed the Engineers' monument, offered free access to the Casino parking lot for visits to the memorial, set up night lighting of the Stone, and completed landscaping on the east side of the monument.

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[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid.
[191] *The Gazette*, 21 October 1994.
[192] *The Gazette*, *The Montreal Catholic Times*, and CJAD 800 ran with Pidgeon's story.

Pidgeon's efforts to raise the profile of the city's Famine site did not end there, nor were they restricted to Montreal. He kept the Irish embassy in Ottawa abreast of what was happening in his campaign to improve the city's Famine memorial and provided updates to Irish diasporic publications, including *Irish America Magazine* and *Tain: the Magazine of the Australian Irish Network*. On Pidgeon's initiative, the United Irish Societies of Montreal also developed relationships with The Great Famine Commemoration Committee and the Cobh Heritage Centre, two state-sponsored Irish historical bodies that were eager to learn more about the 1847 migration to Montreal. Although the Black Stone remained a less recognizable Irish Famine monument than Grosse-Île's Celtic Cross, Pidgeon did manage to generate some national and international interest in the site.

This effort to raise awareness of the historical experiences of Famine migrants in Montreal was part of a larger movement to brand the site Irish, a label that had never quite stuck to the Stone. At the end of the twentieth century, the monument was still seen by many as "the Anglican respect to those who died," and not the most fitting tribute to the predominantly Irish Catholic Famine migrants who were buried in Pointe Saint-Charles.[193] In the 1990s, several ideas circulated about how best to augment the Irishness of the site, but Irish groups in Montreal, like their predecessors since the late nineteenth century, often found themselves at odds over how to appropriately mark the Irish cemetery and memorialize the Famine.

[193] Don Pidgeon, interview by author, Montreal, QC, 29 August 2006.

In November 1992, the St. Patrick's Society proposed an Irish "garden of remembrance" at the reputed site of the burial grounds.[194] Six months later, Don Pidgeon also expressed support for an "Irish park" adjacent to the memorial site.[195] However, without the backing of city officials or the endorsement of the AOH, the Irish Catholic organization traditionally responsible for the care of the monument, this proposal soon fell by the wayside. The United Irish Societies (UIS) was more successful in its campaign to decorate the fence around the memorial site with 128 shamrocks, an idea first conceived by Philip Bristow and Don Pidgeon in the summer of 1993.[196] Donations were solicited from members of the UIS and its sister societies to pay for the installment of cast iron shamrocks in the fence, in an effort to "create an awareness to all who pass by, on this busy thoroughfare, that this is indeed an Irish memorial historic site."[197] Even this simple decorative flourish created tension among Irish societies in the city. It took some convincing to get certain representatives of Irish groups to abandon the idea of placing the crests of their respective societies on the fence and agree that the shamrock was a more appropriately universal Irish symbol. Members of the AOH, who opted not to contribute to the shamrock scheme, were even less enamoured with another commemorative concept proposed by the UIS: the erection of a 15-foot green marble "Irish Cross" at one end of the memorial site, "where the Civil Engineers cairn had

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[194] Pádraig Breandán Ó Laighin to Madame Julie Boivan, Architecte—Agent de développement culturel, 14 September 1994, Pidgeon Papers.
[195] Don Pidgeon to Rev. Canon Philip Bristow, 7 May 1993, Pidgeon Papers.
[196] Canon Philip Bristow to Donald Pidgeon, 8 July 1993, Pidgeon Papers.
[197] Michael Spears, President of the United Irish Societies of Montreal, "A Shamrock for the Stone," *Southwest Quebec Dialogue* 7, no. 9 (February 1994): 5.

been."[198] In November 1994, UIS president Michael Spears called on Irish organizations, the larger Irish community and corporate sponsors to raise the $15,000 necessary to purchase and place the cross.[199] However, AOH members, most notably longtime chaplain Father Tom McEntee, scuttled the plan to install the Irish cross, insisting that the Black Stone was Famine memorial enough. After over one hundred years of struggling to preserve their historic site in Pointe Saint-Charles, groups of Irish Catholics in Montreal clearly still found it difficult to agree on how to best memorialize the burial place of Famine migrants to their city.

Figure 4.08. The rock and the shamrocks, August 2006

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[198] Don Pidgeon, "Update on the Black Stone Monument Lot," October 1994, Pidgeon Papers.
[199] Michael Spears, "The Black Stone Monument Lot on Bridge St.," November 1994, Pidgeon Papers.

There were, however, two initiatives introduced in 1994 designed to enhance the Irishness of the memorial site that met with general approval. Irish groups were quick to accept the City of Montreal's offer to construct a fenced-off identification area between the sidewalk and the parking area facing the Black Stone, in which an interpretive plaque with text in English, French and Irish was displayed.[200] For those Irish Montrealers long disgruntled with the absence of references to the Irish or their migration in 1847 on the Stone, the City's plaque was a welcome and long overdue addition to the memorial site:

> In 1847, six thousand Irish people, seeking refuge in a new land, died here of typhus and other ailments, and were buried in mass graves. The stone marks approximately the centre of the cemetery. Immediately to the east of here, twenty-two hospital sheds had been constructed. Many Grey Nuns, several priests, and also John Easton Mills, Mayor of the City of Montréal, who selflessly came to care for the sick, themselves contracted typhus and died. May they rest in peace.

Following Pádraig Ó Laighin's suggestion, the City of Montreal also recognized the historical influence of the Irish in the vicinity of the memorial site by agreeing to name a new road in the area (running between the Bonaventure expressway and Bridge Street) Rue des Irlandais. Although not directly leading to the memorial site, the street is located very near the site of the fever sheds and the reputed burial grounds of 1847, and was thus seen by Montrealers of Irish descent as an important sign that the City was serious about finally recognizing the Irish heritage of the area.[201]

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[200] *The Gazette*, 21 October 1994. The proposal to erect a plaque emphasizing the Irishness of the memorial site had been put forward as early as November 12, 1992 by Dr. Gus Ó Gormáin, President of the St. Patrick's Society, in a letter to Mayor Doré. The idea was reintroduced on June 8, 1993 when Don Pidgeon, Canon Philip Bristow, John O'Shea, and Pat Leyne met with CN representatives.

[201] As illustrated by the recent outcry over city council's decision to change the name of avenue du Parc to avenue Robert-Bourassa, the naming of streets and sites in Montreal is a politically significant, and often contentious, undertaking. By February 2007, protests led Mayor Tremblay to abandon the plan and look for a less controversial way to commemorate the late premier.

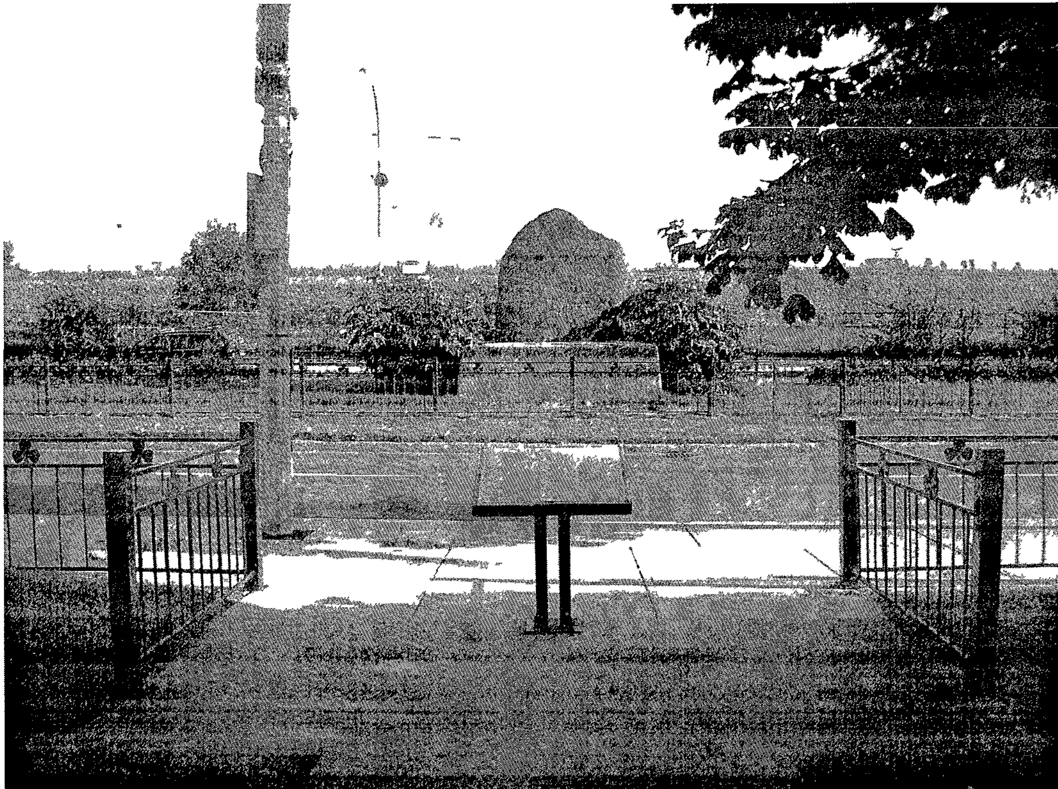

Figure 4.09. The memorial site with plaque, August 2006

While the naming of Rue des Irlandais, the addition of the interpretive plaque, and the installation of shamrocks went some way towards imprinting Irishness on the site, national historic site designation, which would indelibly mark the memorial as an Irish Famine site and preserve its place in Pointe Saint-Charles, was proving much more elusive. Following the lead of T.P. Slattery, who twenty-five years earlier had first sought national recognition for the historic site, representatives of the UIS, the AOH, and St. Patrick's Society broached the idea of appealing to the HSMBC at their meeting with the CN in June 1993.[202] One year later, Don Pidgeon began consulting with Warren Allmand, M.P. for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, on how best to approach the matter of attaining national

[202] Don Pidgeon to Michael Spears, President, United Irish Societies of Montreal, 14 June 1993, Pidgeon Papers.

historic status for the Stone. Following Allmand's advice, Pidgeon crafted an application to the HSMBC that stressed the generosity of Canada welcoming these immigrants in 1847, the selflessness of Montrealers who succoured the sick, the compassion of French Canadian families who took in Irish orphans, and the achievements of subsequent generations of Irish Canadians who helped build Montreal and Canada.[203] Regardless of the persuasiveness of Pidgeon's appeal, the bid to have the Black Stone designated a national historic site was not likely to succeed while Parks Canada was preoccupied with reevaluating its commemorative intentions for Grosse-Île following its public hearings.

In its 1994 *Report on the Public Consultation Program*, Parks Canada analyzed the demands made by Irish Canadians for full recognition of the island's Irish history and determined "the historical importance of Grosse-Île arises precisely from the significance that the site has for different people."[204] It then urged the HSMBC to "re-examine the thematic orientation which had been recommended for the site."[205] Reluctant to completely abandon its original commemorative plan, the HSMBC advised that the tragic events of 1847 be given emphasis as a particular theme but only under the rubric of the general commemorative theme of immigration. Once the Heritage Minister, Michel Dupuy, had accepted this commemorative recommendation and appointed an advisory panel to help implement the plan, it seemed certain that the Irish aspect of the island's history would be overlooked as the commemorative focus of the national historic site. However, on St. Patrick's Day 1996, Sheila Copps announced that the island was to be

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[203] Don Pidgeon to The Assistant Secretary, HSMBC, 13 July 1994, Pidgeon Papers.
[204] Parks Canada, *Report on the Public Consultation Program*, 11.
[205] "Excerpts From the Minutes of the HSMBC," 10 March 1994, 24.

renamed Grosse-Île and the Irish Memorial and that Parks Canada would make the events of 1847 a focal point of its commemoration.[206] A series of sesquicentennial commemorative events on the island organized by Parks Canada the following year and the erection of a new Irish Famine memorial on the island in 1998 drew further attention to Grosse-Île's history as an Irish Famine site.[207]

Figure 4.10. Panels listing names of those who died en route and on site in 1847, August 2006

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[206] Several factors led to Parks Canada's decision to change the commemorative plan for the island. Canadian heritage agencies had a hard time ignoring four years of persistent Irish Canadian lobbying as well as the significant pressure applied by Irish interests from outside Canada. Mary Robinson, who referred to Grosse-Île as the most important of all international famine sites and stressed that the tragedy of 1847 transgressed national borders, was particularly instrumental in influencing public opinion. The surge of interest in the island expressed by the Irish in Canada and beyond must also have reassured Parks Canada that with an Irish focus this national historic site might actually prove to be a heritage windfall. Moreover, there were other opportunities arising for national heritage celebrations of immigration that persuaded Parks Canada to using Grosse-Île as Canada's primary historic immigration site. Plans were underway to have Pier 21 in Halifax designated a national historic site where Canada's immigration experiences could be commemorated.

[207] Designed by the architectural firm Lucienne Cornet and the Émile Gilbert et associés the memorial consists of a circle of stones measuring thirty feet in diameter, bisected by a cross pathway. On this pathway are a series of rusted iron sculptures in the shape of ship sails. Twelve interlinked glass panels standing at a height of ten feet line the perimeter of the circle. The names of those who are known to have died on the island from 1832 onwards can be seen on the upper two thirds of each panel. Below, images of 1500 ships are etched in the glass, each representing an unnamed person buried at Grosse-Île. This design draws attention to ways in which the past is perceived through lenses constructed in the present.

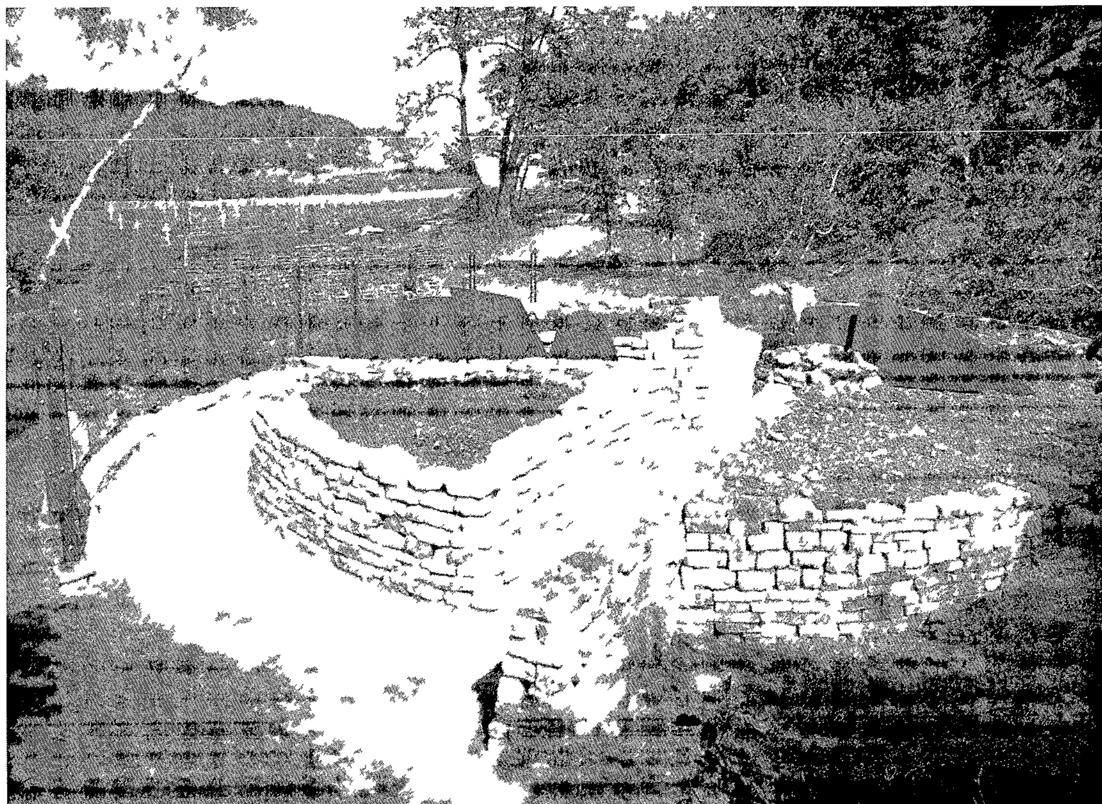

Figure 4.11. 1998 memorial on Grosse-Île, August 2006

Parks Canada's decision to rename the island and commemorate the experiences of Irish immigrants on Grosse-Île in 1847 confirmed the Black Stone's ancillary position as Canada's second Famine memorial, reducing the likelihood of it gaining official recognition as a nationally historic site. In response to Pidgeon's appeal for national recognition of the Black Stone, the HSMBC stated that "the object" would probably not "meet the criteria for commemoration at the national level," offering assurance that "the Irish heritage in Canada will receive a suitable and fitting commemoration at Grosse-Ile."[208] Pidgeon responded by arguing that the Montreal memorial is significant not only

[208] Lawrence Friend, Executive Secretary, HSMBC, to Don Pidgeon, 18 August 1994, Pidgeon Papers.

for those of Irish heritage in Canada, but also for the Irish throughout the United States and Ireland. Insisting that the Stone "is more than a rock," Pidgeon viewed the memorial as emblematic of "the history of Irish Canadians who came in search of a new life. Some found only a grave, but those who survived helped find a new country."[209] Though the HSMBC's executive secretary, Lawrence Friend, remained unconvinced that the Board would come to see the Black Stone in the same light, he did consent to bring Pidgeon's request to the HSMBC's attention "to determine if it would agree to consider this matter despite current policy."[210]

At meetings through the spring and summer of 1995 the HSMBC and its Cultural Pluralism Committee agreed that the typhus epidemic of 1847, "an event of great importance in the history of the Irish in Canada," would "receive appropriate national recognition in the commemoration of Grosse-Ile National Historic Site," but they were not yet sure what to do with the Black Stone, which they found to be "of great interest, but problematic." While the Stone "seemed to occupy a special place in the Irish community of Montreal," the Board questioned, "whether it was similarly, an icon to the Irish community at large." Keenly aware of how controversial its Grosse-Île commemoration had become, the HSMBC was sure to be both cautious and comprehensive in its appraisal of the Stone's national significance and commemorative potential. At its July 1995 meeting, the Board took time to discuss the historiography of the Irish in Canada, noting "the lack of homogeneity and commonality of the Irish

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[209] Don Pidgeon to Lawrence Friend, Executive Secretary, HSMBC, 6 September 1994, Pidgeon Papers.
[210] Lawrence Friend, Executive Secretary, HSMBC, to Don Pidgeon, 22 September 1994, Pidgeon Papers.

experience in the Canadian context." After further consideration at a meeting in November 1995, it was decided that to better understand the historic significance of Montreal's Famine memorial the Board should consult a research paper on the Black Stone prepared by A.B. McCullough, a historian at the Historical Services Branch. The HSMBC also solicited the views of nine prominent scholars (three each from Quebec, Ontario, and the Atlantic provinces) specializing in the field of Irish history in Canada regarding "the importance of the Stone to the Irish Catholic community in Canada."[211]

In its analysis of questionnaires completed by the nine experts (who remained anonymous) the HSMBC noted "a clear regional divergence on the importance of the Stone." The scholars from Quebec all believed that the monument was widely known and of great symbolic importance to Irish Catholics across Canada. However, the respondents from Ontario and the Atlantic provinces did not believe that the Stone was widely known across Canada, though they did recognize that it was of particular symbolic importance to Irish Catholics in Montreal. Two of the scholars from Ontario urged the HSMBC to approach the commemoration of the Black Stone "with both caution and sensitivity." While acknowledging that the monument ought to be recognized as significant to the Catholic Irish community in Montreal, they argued that "it would be a mistake…to present the Monument as a powerful symbol of the Famine-centred interpretation of the Catholic Irish in Canada." Most of the scholars enlisted by the HSMBC were sure to

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[211] Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, "Excerpts From the Minutes of the Board Regarding the Black Stone Monument," July 1995.

point out that what happened in 1847 was not typical of the nineteenth century Irish immigration experience to Canada and thus should not be commemorated as such.[212]

Based on this survey and its research into the importance of the Black Stone to the Canadian Irish community, the HSMBC decided "it was not prepared to recommend that the Black Stone Monument is of national historic significance." While acknowledging that the Black Stone Monument was important to the Irish community in and about Montreal "as a symbol of the rooting and survival of the Irish in Canada," the HSMBC did not believe that the site was seen as significant outside of Quebec. Montrealers interested in the national commemoration of Famine immigration and the typhus epidemic of 1847 were once again directed towards the national historic site at Grosse-Île.[213]

Despite the HSMBC's decision not to confer national historic designation, many Irish Catholics in Montreal continued to look to the Black Stone as a nationally significant memorial and a unique keystone to their Irish Canadian identity. Even though the largely Irish Catholic influx during the Famine was atypical in the history of nineteenth century Irish immigration to Canada, and the majority of the 70,000 Famine migrants who arrived in Montreal in 1847 left the city (and in many cases British North America for the United States), some Montrealers of Irish Catholic descent remained adamant that the Stone stood as their "phoenix," a symbol of their emergence from the ashes of Irish historical catastrophe to embark on the journey towards becoming

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[212] Ibid.
[213] Lawrence Friend, Executive Secretary, HSMBC, to Don Pidgeon, 24 December 1997, Pidgeon Papers.

Canadian nation-builders.[214] Unlike Grosse-Île, the tragic end point for thousands of Irish emigrants, the memorial in Montreal, Canada's major metropolis for one hundred years after Confederation, was not only a reminder of the terrible suffering and loss of 1847, but also, as Don Pidgeon put it, a symbol of how "the Catholic Irish dismissed as illiterate pig farmers went on to be educated and to be society's leaders."[215] While such rhetoric was deployed strategically as part of the campaign to gain national historic status for the Stone, it did reflect an upsurge of interest in celebrating a Catholic Irish-Canadian identity at the site of the Stone, especially after Grosse-Île became the subject of controversy. The memorial was an aide-mémoire of how far they had advanced in Canadian society and of the hardship endured by their forebears who—outnumbered by Quebec's francophone majority and overlooked by Anglo-Protestants—had lived "the essential minority experience in Canada."[216] Just as "other cultural groups have their icons and symbols which represent the challenges that they have overcome," the Stone, according to Patrick O'Hara, historian for the St. Patrick's Society of Montreal, was an indispensable landmark symbolizing "the long and difficult journey the Irish travelled in establishing themselves in Canada."[217]

Montreal's Famine site was not only seen to serve as a reminder of Irish Canadian perseverance in the face of adversity, it was also an invaluable repository of Irish

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[214] *The Gazette*, 21 May 1996.
[215] Ibid.
[216] *The Gazette*, 13 March 1998.
[217] Patrick O'Hara to Roch Samson and Yvon Desloges, 19 November 2004, Pidgeon Papers. O'Hara did his best to get the attention of his French-Canadian correspondents at the HSMBC by arguing that "To forego [the Stone's] recognition is to forego the Irish community, just as foregoing Rocket Richard or Paul Émile Borduas as French Canadian icons would produce similar incredibility."

memory that could be used to combat contemporary famine. Irish Catholics in the diaspora at the end of the twentieth century were in a position to move beyond traditional nationalist grievances and the sectarian animosities persisting in Northern Ireland and draw on their traumatic historical experience of Famine in order to raise awareness of present-day deprivation and the struggles of the subaltern elsewhere. Irish President, Mary Robinson, champion of this commemorative perspective, visited Grosse-Île and Montreal in August 1994 in an effort to parlay interest in the Famine into action against allowing such a tragedy to repeat itself at the end of the twentieth century. Though this way of framing the historic significance of the Black Stone was not entirely new,[218] by the 1990s, there was a greater sense of assuredness among those of Irish descent that they could "use the tragic experience from Montreal's past to reach out to others who live similar situations today, such as in Rwanda and Zaire," and "relieve hunger, misery and want."[219] The notion that the Famine lent the Irish a unique historical perspective and an enriched empathy—a commemorative perspective promoted at Famine sites in Ireland and throughout the diaspora—offered Irish Montrealers a sense of moral purpose in remembrance and an Irish identity that was transnational in its scope.

While commemorations at the Black Stone helped shape national and diasporic Irish identities that resonated with many Montrealers, the narratives of Famine

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[218] Thirty years before Robinson's visit to Montreal, Irish Trade Representative John Carey spoke at the May 1964 pilgrimage to the Stone, urging those in attendance to have "a positive attitude in helping those in other countries who, today, go to bed hungry and experience their own misery." *The Gazette*, 25 May 1964. Two years later, after the Irish Stone Committee had convinced the City of Montreal to not remove the Stone, Councillor Kenneth McKenna delivered a similar message: "This monument must remain not primarily as a melancholic reminder of this tragedy but as a perpetual warning to us all of the results of racial hatred and indolent governments." *The Montreal Star*, 22 June 1966.

[219] *The Gazette*, 25 May 1997; *The Gazette*, 6 June 1992.

remembrance were essentially negotiated at a local level out of a set of power relationships and identities specific to Montreal at the end of the twentieth century. The recent steps taken to preserve the Black Stone and commemorate the sesquicentennial of the Famine were part of a larger effort by Irish Catholics in the city to lay claim to the city's Irish heritage before it disappeared. With "few conspicuous monuments to commemorate the mark the Irish have left,"[220] there were various attempts to reconstruct what Stuart Hall refers to as "imaginary, knowable places."[221] Griffintown, an Irish Catholic neighourhood closely associated with the arrival of Famine migrants to Montreal, was singled out as a quintessential Irish lieu de mémoire in the city. By the time of the demolition of St. Ann's church's in 1970, the neighbourhood, formerly "one of the city's most vibrant,"[222] had become increasingly non-residential.[223] However, with the construction of Parc St. Ann's/Griffintown on the corner of Basin and Montagne streets, at the site where St. Ann's church stood from 1850 until 1970; and the creation of various cultural productions celebrating the community's long history, Griffintown was reconstructed as an Irish Catholic heritage site.[224] These efforts to enshrine Griffintown in

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[220] Ibid.
[221] Stuart Hall, "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity," in *Culture, Globalization and the World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, ed. Anthony D. King, (Minneapolis: the University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 35.
[222] *The Gazette*, 16 March 2002.
[223] In 1984, Griffintown residents buried a time capsule beside the bicycle path at the end of Dock Street to be unearthed in 2084 as a reminder of the former vibrancy of the neighbourhood. See *The Gazette*, 17 March 2001.
[224] See Patricia Burns, *The Shamrock & The Shield: An Oral History of the Irish in Montreal* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1998); Richard Burman, *20th Century Griffintown in Pictures* (Lachine, QC: Burman Productions, 2002); *Ghosts of Griffintown: Stories of an Irish Neighbourhood.* DVD. Directed by Richard Burman. Produced by Richard Burman. Montreal, QC, 2003; and Sharon Doyle Driedger, *An Irish Heart: How a Small Immigrant Community Shaped Canada* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2010).

public memory "as the centre of Irish life in Montreal" were part of the ongoing struggle in Montreal by its various ethno-linguistic groups to leave their mark on the city's memorial landscape.[225]

St. Patrick's Church, which rivals Griffintown as one of the most iconic Irish Catholic historic sites in the city, also received close memorial attention at the end of the twentieth century. By 1997, the year of its 150th anniversary, St. Patrick's had undergone a $5 million renovation, and been declared a national historic site, a designation which proved to be a much safer way for the HSMBC to draw attention to the city's Irish Catholic heritage than focusing on the Black Stone. However, just as the celebrations of Griffintown's Irish heritage shed light on the city's Famine memorial, St. Patrick's sesquicentennial commemoration drew attention to the influx of Irish Catholics into Montreal in 1847. Getting in on the act of remembering the 150th anniversary of the Famine, St. Patrick's erected a memorial plaque and held a commemorative mass in memory of "a disaster which led to a million deaths in Ireland from starvation," and the five priests of St. Patrick's who died while administering to those suffering from "the hunger related typhus plague." The parent church of English-speaking Catholics in Montreal, which had ignored the centenary of the Famine fifty years earlier, had by the end of the twentieth century finally come to associate itself with a tradition of Famine commemoration that had largely been initiated and sustained by Irish Catholics associated with working class neighbourhoods below the hill.

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[225] *The Gazette*, 16 March 2002.

Conclusion

By the end of the twentieth century, Famine memory in Montreal had worked its way into the construction of other Irish Catholic lieux de mémoire in Montreal, but the Black Stone in Pointe Saint-Charles unquestionably remained the focal point for Famine remembrance, as it had been for the past one hundred years. It symbolized what was seen as the rather grim genesis of Montreal's Irish community, despite the fact that Irish immigrants had begun to establish themselves in the city a generation before the Famine. In the lead up to the 2001 St. Patrick's Day parade, *the Gazette* instructed its readers to "start with a visit to the lugubrious Black Rock" in order "to fully appreciate the Irish in Montreal."[226] AOH chaplain Thomas McEntee saw the Stone "in all its bleakness" amidst the ceaseless traffic of Bridge Street as "a sad testimony to what happened" to "the poorest of immigrants" who had arrived in Montreal from Ireland during the Famine.[227] But commemorating the Famine at the site of the Black Stone had always been about more than just mourning the loss of the thousands of Irish immigrants who died of typhus and were buried in mass graves in Montreal. By the time of the sesquicentennial, the memorial site was, more than ever, also a place that reminded Irish Catholics in the city of their traversal across the landscape of the city from Pointe Saint-Charles to the more affluent parts of the city.[228] Identifying themselves historically as a poor but nonetheless unified and vibrant community, the city's submerged Irish, generations removed from the immigrant experience, also looked upon the site as a symbol of their subsequent

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[226] *The Gazette*, 17 March 2001.
[227] *The Gazette*, 21 May 1996. McEntee grew up in Pointe Saint-Charles and had led prayers at the site since 1954.
[228] *The Gazette*, 13 March 1998.

ascension from the slums below the hill to the summit of the city, the upper echelons of the nation, and across the globe through their network of connections with the larger Irish diaspora.

The Black Stone had stood its ground as the city's Famine memorial remarkably well, despite being overshadowed by St. Patrick's commemoration at the time of the Famine centenary; degraded by the directors of Expo 67, who attempted to move the memorial to facilitate easy access to the centennial site; underestimated by municipal authorities, who ignored their obligations to maintain the memorial in the late 1970s and throughout much of the 1980s; overlooked by Canadian heritage institutions, which did not deem the Stone suitable for national designation in the mid-1990s, and outshone by Grosse-Île during the sesquicentennial Famine commemorations. The Stone had also withstood the dissension that came from within the Irish Catholic community regarding what shape Montreal's Famine memorial should take and how its historical significance ought to be delineated. However, these differences of opinion did not prevent groups of Irish Catholics from mobilizing periodically in defence of the memorial site. Their cumulative efforts over the course of the twentieth century had ensured the boulder's fixity and durability in the historical memory and geography of the city.

Figure 4.12. En route to the memorial site, May 31, 2009

Figure 4.13. Flag-bearers, Mounties, and Knights of Columbus on site to mark the Stone's 150th anniversary, May 31, 2009

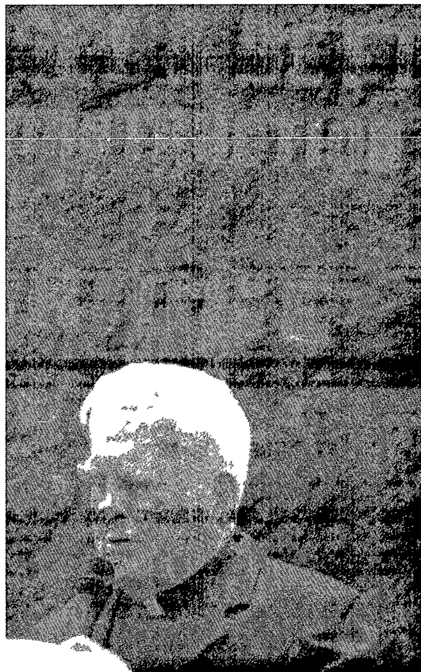
Figure 4.14. Father Murray McCrory, May 31, 2009

Figure 4.15. AOH National President Victor Boyle, May 31, 2009

Figure 4.16. United Irish Society President Ken Quinn with Past President, Don Pidgeon, May 31, 2009

Conclusion

Parallel Departures

This dissertation has explored how groups of Irish Catholics in Liverpool and Montreal from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century commemorated the Famine as a means of reinvigorating a sense of collectivity and identity. As the busiest British and Canadian urban ports of entry during the Famine migration, Montreal and Liverpool were inundated with impoverished and often ailing Irish migrants. In the summer of 1847, officials and residents of both cities struggled to contain typhus, an epidemic that killed thousands, newcomers and natives alike, despite mass quarantine. Though many of the Irish migrants out-migrated subsequently, memory of the devastation wrought following their arrival settled into the historical and memorial consciousness of both cities. In the century spanning the Famine's golden jubilee and sesquicentenary, Irish groups on both sides of the Atlantic kept its memory alive through political rhetoric, religious rituals, and historical commemoration, often recollecting it as the traumatic genesis of Irish emigration, and periodically mobilizing its remembrance in service of various forms of Irish nationalism. However, while Famine memory produced diasporic identities to which Irish groups in Montreal and Liverpool both laid claim, this study has illustrated the particular ways in which Irishness was generated through Famine remembrance in the changing historical contexts of these cities since the end of the nineteenth century.

Beyond the shared ordeal of receiving Famine migrants, Montreal and Liverpool possess a number of similar Irish historical features that make them sites suitable for comparative analysis. In the decades following the mid-century migration, anti-Irish and anti-Catholic prejudice combined to ensure the subordination of Irish Catholics and dominance of Anglo-Protestant elites in both cities, though the sectarian animus between Orange and Green in Liverpool was of a more virulent and stubborn strain. In both urban settings, spatial separation and class divisions reinforced the sense of ethno-religious difference. Catholic Irish residents, many of whom were clustered in working class waterfront neighbourhoods, accounted for a disproportionate share of the cities' unskilled workforces. However, by the early twentieth century, Irish Catholic Montrealers as a group were experiencing greater economic and social mobility and residentially were increasingly dispersed throughout their city. Though the slum clearances beginning in the interwar years had a similar effect of scattering residents of Liverpool's traditional Irish enclave into suburban estates, for many of the Liverpool Irish who remained economically disadvantaged and politically alienated into the postwar period, this movement from the margins to the mainstream of society was a more gradual process. Yet, by the time of the Famine sesquicentenary, Liverpudlians identifying as Irish Catholic, like their counterparts in Montreal, enjoyed at least as much access to the structures of power as did any other group in their respective cities.

The historical experiences of the Irish in Montreal and Liverpool from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century were peculiar to their particular milieu, given each city's distinctive economic structure, political culture, and ethno-religious and

linguistic profile. However, despite differences between the host societies and their individual processes of Irish immigration and integration, successive generations of Irish Catholics in both urban centres were similarly drawn to collective remembrance of the Famine migration. The force of their gravitation towards this common fixed point in the past makes the Liverpool Irish and their Montreal counterparts unique in their respective national contexts and thus a logical focus for comparative study.

To grasp the shifting dynamics of Famine remembrance in Liverpool and Montreal, this dissertation weaves together three historiographical threads. Firstly, while relying on earlier work on Irish migration and ethnicity in order to understand how Irish Catholics in two urban settings experienced social change over time and gradually integrated into their cities and nations, this study complicates the still prevalent historiographical emphasis on ethnic fade and small differences between Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants in Canada and Britain.[1] My analysis of Famine remembrance in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Montreal and Liverpool highlights the extent to which Irish Catholics in both cities relied on their own institutions and associations to protect their interests and traditions. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that even long after these Irish Catholic groups had assimilated into their respective cities, they drew upon memory of the Famine to nurture a sense of ethnic belonging. Secondly, this multi-locale history contributes to the recent scholarship investigating Irishness beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. My comparative study has explored the ways in which Irish Catholics in Montreal and Liverpool—groups that were not particularly

[1] Donald H. Akenson, *Small Differences: Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants, 1815-1922* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988).

representative of the wider Irish experience and identity in their respective national settings—called upon their common historical experience of Famine migration to forge ethnic identifications that ranged from the local to the diasporic. Finally, this study builds on the expansive body of literature analyzing how the past is reworked and represented in the public sphere by groups making claims to authority, authenticity, and identity. My analysis of how the Famine story was used in the formation and transformation of identities has emphasized the contingency and complexity of public memory. The variant versions of the Famine constructed in the century following the jubilee were historically conditioned, not only reflecting contemporary consciousness of the catastrophe, but also playing instrumental roles in the social and political life of the Irish groups receiving them.

In short, this comparative study of Famine remembrance—a cultural phenomenon characterized by some critics and practitioners as static and unchanging—demonstrates that memory of the catastrophe took on different forms in the changing historical and spatial contexts of Liverpool and Montreal between the late nineteenth and late twentieth centuries.[2] While the Famine was an emotionally charged and politically potent memory for Irish groups across the diaspora, particularly for nationalists who viewed it as a

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[2] R.F. Foster, *The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making it up in Ireland* (London: Allen Lane, 2001), 29-31, attacks the recent discourse of Famine commemoration, especially as it circulates through the diaspora, not only for its use of psychoanalytic language to describe the ongoing, collective experience of pain and shame, but also for rehabilitating many of the nationalist views of the Famine that have traditionally been at the forefront of Famine remembrance, especially in the United States. On the other hand, prominent advocates of Famine remembrance, such as Irish journalist John Waters, "Confronting the Ghosts of our Past," in Tom Hayden, ed., *Irish Hunger: Personal Reflections on the Legacy of the Famine* (Colorado: Roberts Rinehart, 1997), 29, have characterized the most recent commemorative anniversary as an opportunity for the global Irish to come to terms with their longstanding "fear of self-belief" and "the culture of amnesia" that has endured since the Famine, a catastrophe that Waters believes was "an act of genocide."

symbol of the catastrophic consequences of British misgovernment in Ireland, Famine commemoration in Montreal and Liverpool did not follow the same script. Though the narratives of remembrance in both settings often did feature similar political and religious motifs, a set of social relations and mnemonic practices unique to these cities made their representations distinct. The Famine memories mobilized by cultural, religious, and political leaders in Montreal and Liverpool were refracted through a range of different voices and received by their Irish constituents and the larger host societies in a variety of ways, depending on the timing and circumstances of their recollection, in turn generating identities that had local application as well as wider national and diasporic relevance.

Beyond the ostensible function of honouring the memory of their forebears, recollecting the Famine was one way that groups of Catholic Irish sought to assert a sense of belonging in Montreal and Liverpool while setting their imagined community apart from the cities' dominant cultures.[3] Unlike their Protestant compatriots, who were generally more likely to align with Anglo-Protestant groups, the Catholic Irish of Montreal and Liverpool formed large ethno-religious minorities in cities where contending ethnic groups used history to bolster their claims to power. While the dynamics of cultural difference were unique in Montreal, with Irish Catholics forming a third community after their francophone co-religionists, in both urban centres Anglo-Protestant groups asserted their dominance. By the time of the Famine's 50th anniversary

[3] Michel Foucault argued that power relations are negotiated through processes of remembrance and that memories from groups that are oppressed or subordinate in society can be regarded as counter-memories to dominant understandings of the past. See Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald Bouchard, trans. Donald Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977): 139-164.

in the late 1890s, Irish Catholic groups in Montreal and Liverpool, though two generations removed from the influx of Irish into their cities, were similarly motivated to reconstruct the Famine moment. Reconstituting this tragic historical episode inscribed Irish Catholic cultural identities to strengthen group solidarity that would challenge their socio-economic subordination and assert political legitimacy in the public sphere.

Yet the particular ways in which Irish groups in both cities used Famine migration to make claims to inclusivity and difference were shaped by a range of factors, including proximity to Ireland and the timing and extent of Irish immigration. In the case of Montreal, the number of incoming Irish fell precipitously following the Famine. By the time of the 1897 jubilee commemoration, the Irish inflow had evaporated to the point that only one in thirty residents was Irish-born. However, for the one in six Montrealers who still claimed Irish origin, the Famine could serve as a powerful reminder of their Irish origins.[4] With the disappearance of immigration as an integral part of lived Irish experience in Montreal, and the scarcity of what Pierre Nora calls "real environments of memory," there was growing anxiety and shame about "the work of forgetting" that had gone on over time.[5] In this context, Famine remembrance at the site of the city's 1847

[4] Dorothy Suzanne Cross, "The Irish in Montreal, 1867-1896" (master's thesis, McGill University, 1969), 14. Immediately following the Famine, Liverpool and Montreal were home to a similar proportion of Irish-born residents: 22.3% and 20.3% respectively. However, the subsequent decline in the proportion of Irish-born in Liverpool was not as sudden or steep as it was in Montreal. By the turn of the century there were still 46,000 (one in fifteen) Liverpudlians who were Irish by birth, and a far greater number in the city who were Irish by descent. See Richard Lawton, "The Components of Demographic Change in a Rapidly Growing Port-City: the Case of Liverpool in the Nineteenth Century," in eds. Richard Lawton and Robert Lee, *Population and Society in Western European Port-Cities, c.1650-1939* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), 118.

[5] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989), 12, 19. David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (New York: Cambridge

burial site became a way of reconnecting with an increasingly remote sense of Irishness. While Nora's stark contrast between older patterns of memory that are organic and spontaneous and modern forms of remembrance that are constructed in their stead does not account for many layers of meaning ascribed to the Famine through its commemoration at the site of the Ship Fever Monument, it is useful in understanding how in the absence of Irish immigration its most potent historical symbol attracted commemorative interest.

If diminished Irish immigration after 1847 is one key to understanding Famine remembrance in Montreal, the same phenomenon in Liverpool must be interpreted in light of the stream of settlers and sojourners that continued to cross the Irish Sea long after the Famine. Irish immigration in Liverpool was not an abstract notion but an ongoing experience that continued to intensify economic competition and exacerbate sectarian discord. The Liverpool Irish thus recollected the Famine migration as a tragedy that had parallels in the present. Emigration was still tapping Ireland of its lifeblood, and Irish newcomers to the city, like their predecessors, though resilient in the face of prejudice and adversity, continued to struggle to adapt to life in Liverpool. The city's Catholic Irish were not alone in using the Famine to blur the line between Irish immigration past and present. By the interwar period, influential sections of the Protestant host society looked to the Famine as a symbol of the city's longstanding Irish problem in an effort to boost an anti-Irish immigration campaign. Thus from both sides of Liverpool's sectarian divide the Famine exodus—embedded in historical consciousness

University Press, 1985), makes a similar point about the efforts that modern societies make to reanimate vestigial links with the past.

as the most traumatic and dramatic example Irish migration—was the historical precedent used to interpret and ascribe meaning to the recurring phenomenon of Irish immigration.

During the movement for Home Rule, when Irish ethnicity was especially instrumental in structuring politics in both cities, Famine memory was used to shape cultural and political identities and allegiances. This was particularly the case in Liverpool, where nationalist councillors were regularly returned and T.P. O'Connor held a firm grip on Scotland division, the only constituency outside of Ireland to elect a member of parliament from the Irish Parliamentary Party. Though some historians have underestimated the use of the Famine as a rallying point in the rhetoric of Home Rule nationalism,[6] and others have downplayed the poignancy of the Famine for the diaspora in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century compared to "other aspects of the nationalist canon,"[7] Liverpool's nationalist leaders produced a range of political publications and performances in which the Famine was recalled as the most tragic example of British colonial misgovernment and presented as justification for the introduction of Home Rule to Ireland. A similar rendition of the Famine was delivered between 1897 and 1913 at commemorative events in Montreal, where support for Home Rule was also forthcoming, though on a much diminished scale. Depending on the audience and agenda, the militancy of the nationalist message was modulated through Famine remembrance. In both cities, small groups of republican nationalists sporadically attempted to deploy the Famine as part of their political polemic, but far more often Home Rule advocates and organizations mobilized memory of the tragedy in support of

[6] See L.W. Brady, *T.P. O'Connor and the Liverpool Irish*, 25.
[7] Gray, 50.

constitutional nationalism and the construction of local identities with which large constituencies of Catholic Irish could identify.

While Home Rule was a contemporary political motivation for groups of Irish Catholics in Montreal and Liverpool to recall the arrival of Famine migrants to their respective shores and adopt a similar historical perspective on the failings of British colonial rule in Ireland, narratives of Famine remembrance were mediated through local political circumstances and concerns. In both cities, the instrumentalization of Famine memory in support of Ireland's right to self-government was often more a demonstration of community solidarity by local Irish groups and an assertion of their place in their respective urban political cultures and memorial landscapes than a display of Irish patriotism.

The Famine was also called upon in the construction of local Irish Catholic identities at the parish level, where Catholicism and Irish nationalism intermeshed. The working class Irish Catholic parishes that catered to Famine immigrants and their descendents became sites of Famine remembrance. Several Famine churches in Liverpool's northern docklands marked their jubilee anniversaries by staging commemorative events and processions that were public demonstrations of pride in the survival of the Catholic faith and Irish nationality in the city, despite sectarian persecution since the Famine. However, by the mid-twentieth century, with the dispersal of many of the longstanding residents of the north end, a number of Irish churches in the area ceased functioning as centres for community or commemoration. Though there were relatively few Irish Catholic parishes in Montreal, where the Catholic Church was largely

French speaking, memory of 1847 was also kept alive in the parishes serving the traditional Irish working class neighbourhoods in the city's southwest. By the end of the nineteenth century, St. Ann's in Griffintown—the site of memorial masses and the starting point for pilgrimages to the Black Stone—collaborated with Irish associations in organizing Famine commemorations, a role assumed since 1970 (following St. Ann's demolition) by St. Gabriel's in Pointe Saint-Charles.

Yet, while parochial acts of commemoration identified the Famine as a powerful point of connection to both faith and fatherland, the larger institutional inclination of the Catholic Church in both cities was to circumvent the Famine legacy in order to avoid stirring up nationalist sentiment and impeding Irish integration into the mainstream of British and Canadian society. Established elements within the Catholic church either avoided memory of the Famine altogether or recalled it only when paying tribute to the example of the abiding faith of priests and nuns who died while attending to Famine migrants afflicted with typhus. In Montreal, St. Patrick's, an Irish Catholic church that traditionally served the city's lace-curtain Irish, showed no interest in the city's Famine memorial, avoiding any act of Famine remembrance for 150 years. Its namesake in Liverpool did construct a Celtic Cross in 1898 commemorating the sacrifice of Father Nugent and the other martyr priests during the Famine, but ensured that no nationalist messages would tarnish its memorial. In both diasporic settings, church authorities only chose to look back to painful chapters of Ireland's past to emphasize their enduring Catholic inheritance, though they had limited success controlling how the Famine was

used to construct overlapping Irish nationalist and Catholic identities in working-class waterfront parishes.

However, with the dispersal of Irish Catholic residents from their traditional neighbourhoods beginning in the interwar period, sites that had once been used to recollect the arrival of the Famine Irish were stripped of some of their commemorative significance. Slum clearances led to the movement of many residents of the north end Irish enclave to suburban council estates. Though the Famine parishes were still dominated by Irish Catholics, those who remained in the north end were increasingly sharing their churches and neighbourhoods with incoming Polish, Italian, and German groups. Famine remembrance also became less of a priority in Montreal by the interwar years, as the traditional Irish Catholic neighbourhoods of Griffintown and Pointe Saint-Charles lost many longtime Irish residents to new and relatively affluent suburbs. The Irish Catholics of the city's southwest had never lived in communal isolation from their working class francophone and Anglo-Protestant neighbours, but by the mid-twentieth century they were just one constituency living amidst an assortment of Jewish, Lebanese, Chinese, Italian, Polish, and Ukrainian immigrants—groups with shared working class interests but disparate pasts to remember and commemorate. As the ethnic profile of their congregations changed, traditional Irish Catholic parishes lost some of the impetus to commemorate their Famine-era genesis.

While the decline of traditional Irish parishes and the concomitant downturn in Famine remembrance occurred in both cities, Montreal, unlike Liverpool, had a more significant and enduring locus for Famine commemoration: an 1847 burial ground

marked by the Ship Fever Monument that over time was transformed into an Irish Catholic Famine memorial. The Black Stone served as a reminder of the Famine migration to Irish Catholics—even as many of them were moving away from the industrial landscape where it stood. Since the 1897 Famine jubilee, the Stone was a site central to Famine remembrance in the city, despite disappointments and disputes over its appearance, inscription, upkeep, and ownership. The various political and commercial threats to which the site was subject over the course of the twentieth century—the GTR's 1900 relocation of the monument to St. Patrick's Square, the reduction of the size of the site in 1912, its general neglect by its official caretakers since the interwar period, the aspersions cast on its authenticity as a Famine-era burial ground, and the prolonged push for its removal in the postwar period of urban renewal—motivated Irish Catholic groups to preserve the site and reacquaint themselves with the historical events that led to its construction. With each perceived attack on the Famine-era burial site and its monumental marker, the Black Stone—once belittled by Irish groups—gained stature as a memorial to the Irish victims of 1847 and a new legitmacy as a symbol of the political struggle of the city's Irish Catholics to protect an important landmark in the cultural landscape of Montreal. As Brian Osborne has recently demonstrated, such "symbolically charged sites" can anchor groups by providing a sense of historical continuity and a venue for the construction of identities.[8] The Black Stone site staked out a space for Famine remembrance in Montreal; it gave Irish Montrealers, including those without

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[8] Brian S. Osborne, "From Native Pines to Diasporic Geese: Placing Culture, Setting Our Sites, Locating Identity in a Transnational Canada," *Canadian Journal of Communication* Vol. 31, 1 (2006): 152.

close ties to Ireland or any kind of ethnic association, the opportunity and right to claim Irishness through the Famine story.

Until the end of the twentieth century, the Liverpool Irish had no comparable site or stone from which the Famine was commemorated. Though "the infrastructure of memory," to borrow Irwin-Zarecka's phrase, in any city comprises various forms of engagement with the past, including textual constructions (newspapers, memoirs, histories) and rhetorical and performative acts of remembrance (speeches, parades, and pageants), monuments and the sites they mark have a particular generative mnemonic capacity.[9] According to Jay Winter, the monument or memorial site—from its moment of conception, through its development and rehearsal of a repertoire of commemorative rituals, to its symbolic accretion over time—can do much to sustain and stimulate memory.[10] While the Famine was not forgotten in Liverpool, with the passing of most Famine parishes and in the absence of any monumental or memorial site that could be made emblematic of the Famine, memory of what John Belchem refers to as "the central historical event in the Liverpool-Irish construction of a collective identity" was remarkably muted in the middle decades of the twentieth century.[11]

Following the establishment of the Irish Free State and the retreat of Irish nationalism in the city, Irish maintenance of Famine memory in Liverpool fell by the

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[9] Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 13.
[10] Jay Winter, "Remembrance and Redemption: a Social Interpretation of War Memorials," *Harvard Design Magazine* (Fall 1999): 71–77; Owen Dwyer, "Symbolic Accretion and Commemoration," *Social and Cultural Geography* 5, no. 3 (2004): 419–35; and Kenneth E. Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997).
[11] John Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse*, xii.

wayside. Not only had the Famine's capacity to function as a unifying memory diminished as Ireland's status was no longer a divisive issue in the city, many Irish Liverpudlians were preoccupied protecting themselves from the perils of poverty and sub-standard housing, as well as the rising tide of anti-Irish immigration sentiment. In this context, the Famine—a memory that moderate Irish nationalists a generation earlier had called upon to challenge the hegemony of the Protestant host society—was appropriated and incorporated into the city's dominant discourse and presented as the antecedent to the contemporary menace of Irish immigration. With the advent of the Second World War, the Famine receded further from memory. The fallout from the Luftwaffe's bombardment of Liverpool and Irish government's neutrality left Irish Catholics in the city wary of inviting accusations of disloyalty and disinclined to recall the historical calamity of Famine while the city was confronted by the catastrophe of war. Not surprisingly, the centenary of the Famine passed with little notice in Liverpool, and would remain a marginal memory during the postwar period.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the Irish were again making their way to Liverpool in search of work on the docks, in processing industries, and in the city's new car plants. But Liverpool's moment of affluence passed quickly, and the Irish were among the communities hardest hit when the city's economic fortunes failed. Moreover, with the imposition of nationalist and unionist politics after 1968, courtesy of the conflict in Northern Ireland, Irish Liverpudlians, particularly those residing in the city's north end, were often viewed as a suspect community. In a political and cultural climate that was

less than hospitable to Irishness, public memory of the Famine, while not extinguished, was rarely rekindled.

Famine commemoration also fell from favour in Montreal at mid-century, as Irishness in the diaspora was generally besmirched by Ireland's decision to forgo fighting alongside Britain and its allies during the Second World War. Moreover, with the horrors of the Holocaust revealed and the refugee crisis in Europe unfolding, Irish claims to victimhood at the hands of the British state, whether past or present, would have rung hollow. Yet the re-interment ceremony that was organized at the Black Stone in 1942, following the discovery of human remains at the site, demonstrates that Irish Catholic groups in Montreal, far more than their counterparts in Liverpool, were in a position to adapt Famine memory to the wartime context. Though this act of remembrance, like its precursors, served the traditional function of marking out cultural difference from the city's other ethnic and linguistic groups and staking an Irish Catholic claim in the memorial landscape, the 1942 re-interment ceremony signalled a shift in the rhetoric of Famine commemoration in Montreal. In place of traditional nationalist grievances over historical wrongs, there was a new emphasis on ecumenical relations between Catholic and Protestant Irish and a celebration of the historic role of Famine migrants as nation builders.

This attempt to recast Irish Famine migrants as Canadian patriots and pioneers, failed to enliven what was a rather sedentary centenary observance in Montreal in 1947, but it did set the tenor of future acts of remembrance at the site. The city's program of urban renewal leading up to Expo '67 and several subsequent political and commercial

initiatives in the 1970s and 1980s that targeted the land on the southwest shore for development had the effect of renewing interest among Irish Montrealers in 1847 and the history of the Famine site. In the process of lobbying municipal officials, CN representatives, and Anglican authorities to ensure the preservation and maintenance of the site, the city's Irish Catholic societies ascribed historical significance to the Black Stone as a reminder of the tragic circumstances of the Famine migration, but also because it stood as a symbol of Irish Catholics' contributions to the building of Canada, particularly their historic role as cultural brokers between the city's francophone majority, with whom they shared their faith, and Anglo-Protestants, with whom they spoke a common language.

If diasporic commemorative interest in the Famine passed away during its centenary anniversary, it was a Lazarus memory that was resurrected towards the end of the century. The occasion of the sesquicentenary provided the Irish in Montreal and Liverpool, along with other Irish groups in centres across the diaspora, an opportunity to use their considerable political clout and cultural capital to incorporate Famine remembrance into public discourse.[12] A century earlier, Irish Catholic groups in both cities had looked back to the Famine in an attempt to assert an Irish Catholic presence and power in the public realm; however, in the intervening years the face of otherness

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[12] T. J. Jackson Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities," *The American Historical Review* 90, No. 3 (June 1985): 567-593, is persuasive in his adoption of Gramsci's notion of hegemony to explore how cultural values are defined and power exerted through public discourses. Subordinate groups represent and reproduce their own stories and experiences that can resist the hegemony of the established social order, but remain marginal to received opinion. Dominant cultures, Lears argues, ultimately exercise the power to control discursive practices through a process of coercion and consent that validate their own values and experiences at the expense of others.

had changed in Liverpool and Montreal, and by the 1990s the trans-generational Irish of both cities—now part of the dominant social structure—were in the privileged position of reclaiming ethnicity through recollections of a past in which they were victimized.

The most significant manifestation of the resurgence of Famine remembrance in Liverpool at the end of the twentieth century was the construction of a large memorial in St. Luke's Gardens—England's first and only Famine memorial—which served as the main focus of the sesquicentennial commemoration. The inauguration of Liverpool's memorial, along with the installation of historic plaques and the performance of various memorial church services over the course of the 1990s, produced a commemorative narrative that announced the return of the Famine—a politically fraught, and at times inadmissible, historical memory—into the city's public discourse. The sesquicentennial season also motivated Irish groups in Montreal to revisit and reinvest in their own Famine memorial. While other Irish Catholic lieux de mémoire in the city incorporated gestures of Famine remembrance during the 1990s, Irish groups reaffirmed the Black Stone site as the focus of Montreal's Famine commemoration by overseeing a series of renovations and additions designed to augment its Irishness and ensure its durability.

National and international currents of Famine remembrance were crucial in shaping the sesquicentennial commemorative undertakings in both cities. Most influential was the narrative of remembrance articulated in the early 1990s by then-Irish President Mary Robinson. Her invitation to the Irish diaspora to apply the lessons learned from the Famine tragedy as a means of combatting contemporary world hunger and suffering was received warmly by Irish groups in Liverpool and Montreal and throughout the diaspora.

This notion of a global Irishness, one not territorially bound to the Republic, promoted through Robinson's commemorative rhetoric gained particular purchase in the context of the peace process in Northern Ireland, as it seemed to offer an alternative to traditional nationalist identities.[13] Thus, through Robinson's framing of Famine memory, Irishness was re-imagined as an ecumenical, progressive, and inclusive identity with which the entire Irish diaspora, and all victims of injustice, regardless of national origin, could identify.

This commemorative narrative, which reaffirmed the traumatic aspects of the 1847 exodus as the quintessential Irish emigrant experience, was popular in Liverpool and Montreal, the two Atlantic cities in which the tragedy of the Famine migration was felt most painfully. The Famine commemoration thus became an opportunity to celebrate the resilience of Irish groups that overcame historical adversity to assume vital political and cultural roles in their respective societies at the end of the twentieth century. Liverpool, for so long the British city most often associated with Irish nationalism and sectarian conflict, was granted official sanction and monetary support from the Irish and British governments to commemorate the Famine. The Irish were now in a position to use Famine memory as an instrument of healing and reconciliation, not only for Liverpool but also on behalf of Northern Ireland at the tail end of thirty years of conflict. In

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[13] Breda Gray, "Gendering the Irish Diaspora: Questions of Enrichment, Hybridization and Return," *Women's Studies International Forum* 23, no. 2 (2000): 167-185, argues that while Robinson's discourse of diasporic Irishness was seen as an alternative to traditional nationalist narratives, her vision of the global Irish also had the effect of reaffirming the Republic, or homeland, as the fulcrum of Irishness. More recently, a version of Robinson's message, leached of its humanitarianism, has been propagated by David McWilliams, Irish economist and journalist, who has urged Ireland to become "the cradle of a global nation" by tapping into the "soft power" of its people who were "forced into exile." *The New York Post*, 15 March 2008.

Montreal, the sesquicentenary, observed in the aftermath of Quebec's fractious 1995 referendum, allowed the Irish to present themselves as exemplary immigrants—a group that helped build Canada and one that continued to serve as bridge builders between French and English. However, while this message came through in commemorations at the Black Stone, its transmission was more powerful from the Celtic Cross on Grosse-Île, which was reaffirmed as Canada's representative Famine site after the public controversy between 1992 and 1996 over how the Irish story on the former quarantine island should be commemorated. Unlike Liverpool's newly minted memorial, which received national approbation, the Black Stone—Canada's oldest Famine memorial—was denied recognition and protection as a national historic site.

While national and international commemorative narratives and political forces were brought to bear on late twentieth century Famine remembrance in Montreal and Liverpool, the local initiatives designed to mark the sesquicentenary were negotiated and often contested within the context of urban cultural politics. Irish groups in Montreal did not always agree on the most appropriate way to memorialize the 1847 burial grounds and its 1859 monument, which for some was still considered a less fitting memorial to the Famine Irish than its counterpart on Grosse-Île, whose Irish Catholic genesis was beyond dispute. Moreover, the lobbying efforts of Irish groups to draw the attention of city officials, the CN, and various heritage agencies to the Black Stone brought to light a range of perspectives on the historical significance of the site.

In Liverpool, the Great Famine Commemoration Committee (GFCCL) stole the sesquicentennial spotlight with its inauguration of the city's Famine monument; however,

its commemorative approach did not go unchallenged. The GFCCL, an avowedly non-denominational group, adopting the ecumenical, humanitarian, post-nationalist commemorative approach legitimated by Mary Robinson and Tony Blair, encountered resistance from authorities at the city's Roman Catholic Cathedral, who were not interested in playing host to Famine commemoration. It also came across the competing interests of a group of Irish Catholics set on making the parish of St. Anthony's in Vauxhall the focal point of Liverpool's Famine commemoration. Despite overtures from the GFFCL to work together, this Catholic group opted not to collaborate in a citywide act of Famine remembrance, instead devoting its efforts to constructing a Heritage Centre and organizing a memorial service at St. Anthony's. The focus of this Irish Catholic commemorative site was on the victims of typhus in 1847 and the enduring faith and nationality of the Famine Irish and their descendents who made their home in the north end, a community that had suffered from long-term economic depression. Unlike the acts of remembrance overseen by the GFCCL, the memorial proceedings at St. Anthony's used the Famine sesquicentenary to produce a Liverpool-Irish identity at the neighbourhood level—one that reflected the Catholic faith, Irish national feeling, and working class interests of the city's traditional north end Irish enclave.

In order to explore how Irish group identities shifted over time, this dissertation has focused on particular moments of remembrance and commemoration in specific historical and spatial circumstances, while also offering a sense of the longue durée of Famine memory. By highlighting the complexity of experiences of Irish migrants and their descendants in Montreal and Liverpool, and the many meanings that have been

ascribed to the Famine in these two diasporic centres since the late nineteenth century, this comparative analysis has laid to rest the notion, implied in some revisionist histories of the Irish in Britain and Canada, that Famine remembrance has long been a uniform exercise in the politics of nostalgia and nationalism imported wholesale from Irish America.[14] Equally, this study has challenged the notion, popularized by commemorators and commentators during the recent sesquicentennial season, that the Famine is a shared, essential trauma that has galvanized the Irish ethnic group across generations and national boundaries. Both conceptions of Famine memory reduce the Irish to caricature. In one case, they are misguided followers of the sentimental and vindictive mythology of Irish-American nationalism; in the other, they are a perennially damaged people ensnared by their traumatic inheritance.

The aftershocks of the Famine migration to Montreal and Liverpool that rippled through the generations had largely faded from living memory by the time of the jubilee, yet Irish groups in both cities in subsequent years would periodically reconstitute the Famine trauma through acts of commemoration and remembrance to formulate identities and interpret contemporary social change. That this memory was built rather than in-built did not detract from its importance in Liverpool and Montreal as a mechanism through which Irish ethnicity was maintained. Despite the predominant historiographical belief that the Famine's long-term cultural significance in Canada and Britain was limited, this

[14] See Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *Irish Emigration and Canadian Settlement: Patterns, Links, and Letters* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 218; and Mary E. Daly, "Nationalism, Sentiment, and Economics: Relations Between Ireland and Irish America in the Postwar Years," *Eire-Ireland: Journal of Irish Studies* 37, no. 1-2 (Spring-Summer, 2002): 74-92.

study shows that at various stages of the twentieth century Famine memory functioned as a binding agent for group solidarity in these urban environments, a point of connection to Ireland, and a touchstone of Irish identity across the diaspora.

Though Famine remembrance has often been downplayed or dismissed by historians of the Irish in Canada and Britain as a forum for the regurgitation of nationalist readings of the Famine, the dissertation demonstrates that the instrumentalization of Famine memory in both cities was often complex, involving the interplay of local, national, and diasporic forces. The shifts in Ireland's political landscape over the course of the twentieth century—whether generated by the movement for Home Rule, the revolutionary upheaval after 1916, the disengagement from the Second World War, or the push and pull of the peace process a half century later—reverberated throughout the diasporic and were formative in shaping Famine remembrance in Montreal and Liverpool. However, these Irish diasporic political influences, most often in the form of a moderate nationalism, were always mediated through a distinctive set of national and local political and socio-economic circumstances. Most crucial was the negotiation, and often contestation, of the narratives of remembrance on a local level, with Irish groups ascribing historical significance to the traces and spaces associated with the Famine in their respective cities. As the timing and context of its recollection in Montreal and Liverpool changed, so too did its signification. Thus, contrary to descriptions of its fixity in historical consciousness, this study shows that the Famine was a remarkably malleable memory with the capacity to accommodate multiple meanings.

As Irish groups in both cities since the late nineteenth century produced various identities through Famine commemoration and remembrance, they narrated the past to make sense of their present. Historians of the Irish in Canada and Britain have expressed frustration with the gaping chasm that persists between what actually happened and what many people of Irish descent, far removed or in no way historically connected to the catastrophe, have remembered happening during the Famine. Nonetheless, these multilayered historical narratives reflected the historical consciousness of groups in Liverpool and Montreal, whose understanding of the Famine was shaped by parish and associational life and larger national and diasporic networks. By looking at what Raphael Samuel refers to as "unofficial sources of historical knowledge," like commemoration, in which history and memory intersect, it is possible not only to bring new perspectives to our understanding of the past but also to gain insight into how social groups in changing contexts have used history to construct local, national, and transnational identities.[15] This thesis suggests that we should look further at Famine memory in different locales to compare its patterns and its preoccupations, as a means of exploring historical memory's relationship with ethnicity and the processes by which the past is transfigured in contemporary societies.

[15] Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory, Past and Present in Contemporary Culture, Vol. 1* (London: Verso, 1994), 17.

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